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**Embargoed until 00.01 GMT November 3, 2023**

**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scottish Opera strengthen partnership with unique opportunity for the next generation of opera talent**

A new partnership to nurture the next generation of international opera talent is unveiled today (Friday, November 3) by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scottish Opera.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is introducing a new one-year Artist Diploma in Opera to offer a highly specialised combination of vocal, movement and acting training, with students performing with Scottish Opera in Glasgow and Edinburgh as a culmination of their studies.

The Diploma is due to launch in September 2025, with applications open from July 2024. It will create a bespoke, world-class learning and performance environment required by contemporary singers and deepens the long-standing relationship between two of Scotland’s national arts organisations.

This rare opportunity for emerging singers to perform with a national company as part of their studies is the final stage of a planned, high-level programme of intensive learning and teaching at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, supported by Scottish Opera from the recruitment phase to the final performances.

Students will work with specialist RCS staff and international guest designers, vocal coaches, directors and conductors and be immersed in weekly coaching, mentoring, residencies and performance opportunities. Full course details are subject to validation.

In addition to performing in RCS’s New Athenaeum Theatre, towards the end of their studies students will perform in a specially chosen opera, presented in collaboration with Scottish Opera, that sits alongside the company’s own productions, at Glasgow’s Theatre Royal and Edinburgh’s Festival Theatre.

All applicants for the Artist Diploma are expected to have an undergraduate degree in vocal performance with those who reach the final selection auditioning for an expert panel supported by the Scottish Opera casting team.

Announcing the new partnership, **Professor Jeffrey Sharkey**, Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, said: “The launch of this unique programme demonstrates beautifully the power and connectivity of the arts in Scotland; a connectivity which enables a world-leading national conservatoire and Scotland’s acclaimed national opera company to join forces to offer an unrivalled opportunity for next generation of leading singers to both train and perform in a dynamic and world-class environment.

“We’re delighted to be working in partnership with Scottish Opera to offer a programme that is responsive to the needs of singers focused on entering the contemporary professional world.”

Scottish Opera General Director **Alex Reedijk** said: “We are delighted to commit to working in partnership with the RCS with this new formal agreement, and it is reinvigorating to look into the future.

“As well as supporting the development of early career singers, it is fantastic for Scottish audiences to have even more opportunity to experience opera on Scottish stages, featuring artists who will no doubt be future stars of the opera world.

“We already have a strong working relationship with the RCS and have them to thank for nurturing homegrown talent and attracting much young talent to Scotland, including members of our Young Company and the likes of Ross Cumming and Lea Shaw who are among the 2023/24 Season's Emerging Artists.”

**Philip White**, Head of Opera at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, said: “The coming together of Scotland’s national opera company with the opera department of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland provides a unique, high-level student experience that is unparalleled in the United Kingdom. The new Artist Diploma course seeks to address the ever-changing landscape of the operatic world in providing the very best training, taking advantage of world-class facilities within a world-class institution.”

Soprano **Anush Hovhannisyan**, Alumni Ambassador for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland’s Opera programme, who performed with Scottish Opera as Violetta in the company’s acclaimed 2017 production of *La Traviata*, said: “The absolutely brilliant three years I spent studying opera at the RCS was the most crucial time in my education. As a young student, I was lucky enough to sing lead roles in three major opera productions in collaboration with Scottish Opera. Having this exceptional training as a basis for my career, I always felt a step ahead.

“RCS's new Artist Diploma in Opera is offering an extraordinary setup for aspiring young singers. It's designed to create a platform where young artists gain vital professional experience, get to be seen under the best possible light working with the glorious Scottish Opera Orchestra, and being nurtured and receiving guidance from the fantastic team at the RCS opera department.”

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is consistently ranked in the top ten of the prestigious QS World University Rankings for performing arts education and has an illustrious history in producing world-renowned classical singers who, in addition to Hovhannisyan, include Grammy-nominated mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill and 2017 Cardiff Singer of the World Catriona Morison.

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in the country. The Company was founded by Sir Alexander Gibson, an alumnus of the RCS and the namesake of the Conservatoire’s Alexander Gibson Opera School. Opera productions are recognised worldwide for their quality of craftsmanship and performance, and the Company has been nominated for a 2023 International Opera Award.

Scottish Opera regularly tours to all corners of Scotland, reaching 60 different communities in 2022/23. Each year, Scottish Opera works with around 100 primary schools, giving 10,000 pupils an opportunity to sing, act and dance.

RCS Opera’s Double Bill has its last performance tonight (3 November) at the Alexander Gibson Opera School, while Scottish Opera’s production of *The Barber of Seville* opens at Edinburgh’s Festival Theatre.

**-ENDS-**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

The Alexander Gibson Opera School (AGOS) at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is named in honour of Sir Alexander Gibson, a former student of the Conservatoire (then the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama).

Sir Alexander was the youngest-ever conductor of Sadler’s Wells when appointed Musical Director in 1957, the first Scot to conduct the (then) Scottish National Orchestra when appointed in 1959 and founder of Scottish Opera in 1962.

The Alexander Gibson Opera School opened in 1998, the first purpose-built opera school in the UK.  The foundation stone was laid by Lady Gibson, Sir Alexander’s widow.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is also home to two internationally important opera archives – the John Steane Collection and the Raymond Leppard Collection.

**ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND: LIKE NOWHERE ELSE**

* [Established](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2F175-years%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652144150%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Sf4LPzcd3oxNByJA77Y%2FU22mt5qWmBEafOHBaCyKNaQ%3D&reserved=0) in 1847.
* RCS celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2022. The [book](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fbox-office%2Fproducts%2Fraising-the-curtain-hardback-book%2F%3Futm_campaign%3D2051289_175%252520book%252520launch%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_content%3D%26dm_t%3D0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652144150%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=7%2BLVD67J6mpt6smX96UGx%2BTWHYYTsNAZErcB%2Bk4gw28%3D&reserved=0) *Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Raising the Curtain* turns the spotlight on the fascinating history of this world-renowned performing arts school.
* Specialist [teaching](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fstudy%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652144150%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=x3nIswAcjnWGMijYLJ%2FEQUUp7nkx3cXuJGhY38zJHKg%3D&reserved=0) across music, drama, dance, production, film and education.
* The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a world [top ten](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fwhy-rcs%2Flike-nowhere-else%2Fworld-leading%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652144150%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DR3JSUv0y0THsv3yYgH8mP3D4rvbmNHJTVD07IWpBms%3D&reserved=0) destination to study the performing arts (QS World University Rankings 2023).
* [Partnerships](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fwhy_rcs%2Flearn-from-the-best%2Fpartners%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652144150%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2Bqj3DwHakyYX4nLKSHBwDv9Tx4Tfym3p%2F9453JCoSqs%3D&reserved=0) with national artistic companies.
* One of Scotland’s busiest arts venues. Visit the [box office](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fbox-office%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rD2yiknhyVHeu0MsQLDZqM35oBQ9I7DTNydyqCi86uw%3D&reserved=0) for performance information and tickets.
* More than 3,000 students are taught every year through the [Junior Conservatoire](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fjuniorc%2Fabout-us%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=TnV0XMPe5frhwy7g1ggZJuZySj3FZMlCTJ0uiVYRnUw%3D&reserved=0) and [Short Courses](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fcourses-a-z%2Fshort-courses%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=O58Cvy4f4ag6gpzMjkGFNHgOvBGll7mWTGujowpB34A%3D&reserved=0), as well as national [Fair Access](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Ffair_access%2Ffair-access%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=zLgcJzSWB9sanz0b%2FwLPng7ruqKzVPn4LTwDS0tDXXE%3D&reserved=0) programmes.
* [Download](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fprospectus%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=yk4G1hwF2cuNJsN1anxO%2Bqg9ol21M%2F%2BAdKNFh%2BaqR2U%3D&reserved=0) the prospectus.
* Support the future of the arts through the We are Still Here student scholarship [campaign](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rcs.ac.uk%2Fsupport-us%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C2562b29e2dcf43e43c7e08dbdb9d3f21%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638345240652300418%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FZlEZDxZ4ViFfnATt9151KnGhOH5XZoCaLPuii2OQew%3D&reserved=0).

**SCOTTISH OPERA**

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the country’s largest performing arts organisation. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’.

Scottish Opera’s repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres. For mainstage and concert productions, the Company collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, and choruses for each opera. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, a 2017 UK Theatre Award, and a 2020 RPS Award. The 2023/24 Season sees productions first staged at Scottish Opera appearing in Paris, Cardiff, Detroit, Vancouver, and Toronto.

The Company tours extensively to ensure performances are within reach of as many of Scotland’s dispersed population as possible. Specially adapted Pop-up Opera performances bring shortened classics and original works to thousands of people each year. *Opera Highlights* presents arias and ensembles from across the repertoire in new narratives. This is one of the most extensive touring programmes of any European opera company and a much-valued contribution to Scotland’s cultural life, particularly in remote and island communities. In the 2022/23 60th Anniversary Season, performances were staged in over 60 locations across Scotland, and the same is achieved in 2023/24.

The Company’s Outreach & Education programme, the longest running in Europe, includes in-person and digital Primary Schools Tours, bringing children the opportunity to perform their own specially commissioned piece alongside professional singers. Around 120 schools and 9,000 pupils take part in the live tour each year. Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive and affordable through availability of free and subsidised tickets, audio-described performances, and specially devised Access performances with Dementia Friendly values at their core.

Scottish Opera is committed to presenting opera at the highest possible standards across Scotland as well as online to UK and worldwide digital audiences. The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers*, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer. Eight On Screen operas are available to watch at www. scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen. These include Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Menotti’s *The Telephone*, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*.

Scottish Opera is core funded by The Scottish Government.