



Royal College of Music's Centre for Performance Science awarded Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education for pioneering research and its impact on society

The Royal College of Music (RCM) has been awarded a Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education, the highest national honour in UK higher and further education. The award celebrates the transformational work of its Centre for Performance Science which is redefining how performance is understood, taught and experienced.

First awarded in 1994, the prizes are granted every two years by the Sovereign on the advice of the Prime Minister, following an independent review by the Royal Anniversary Trust. The prizes recognise outstanding work by UK colleges and universities which demonstrate excellence and innovation and deliver real benefits to the wider world.

Founded in 2000, the Centre for Performance Science at the Royal College of Music is the first of its kind in a conservatoire. In partnership with Imperial College London since 2015, the Centre unites expertise from across the arts, medicine, engineering, natural sciences and business to explore performance in all its dimensions. Over its 25-year history, the Centre has led groundbreaking research teams, developed new courses and fostered global collaborations that have shaped performance science and advanced professional performance training worldwide.

James Williams, Director of the Royal College of Music, commented: 'The Royal College of Music is immensely grateful to the Royal Anniversary Trust for this prestigious honour and award. The success of our research and teaching programmes at the Centre for Performance Science is thanks to the talents of our staff and students and the many partners with whom we share this award.'

Professor Aaron Williamon, Head of the Royal College of Music's Centre for Performance Science, said: 'We are honoured to be awarded a Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education. This year marks 25 years of performance science at the Royal College of Music, and while this prize recognises our track record of research, teaching and knowledge exchange, it also serves to fuel our efforts in shaping the future of music education and our broader impact in society.'

The prize-winning institutions were announced at a special reception held at St James's Palace last night, with the presentation ceremony taking place in February 2026. Sir Damon Buffini, Royal Anniversary Trust Chair, commented: 'The Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education

celebrate the power of education to change the world for the better. This much-loved national honour recognises, at the highest level of state, outstanding work in UK universities and colleges, and the remarkable benefit they bring to our economy, society and the wider world. This year we are delighted to honour 19 institutions whose work offers an inspiring snapshot of the excellent and innovative work going on in universities and colleges across the UK. Congratulations all!

Sir Keir Starmer, Prime Minister, said: 'I want to offer my warmest congratulations to all those receiving the Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education for 2024–26. This is a landmark year for the Prizes marking 30 years of recognising and celebrating the tremendous contribution our universities and colleges make to the life of our country.'

The work of the Centre for Performance Science spans performance, health and wellbeing, from world-leading research to practical innovation. Its new [Performance Laboratory](#), opened in 2024, provides an unparalleled facility for simulating high-pressure performance environments, serving both Royal College of Music students and cross-discipline institutions such as the Football Association, the Imperial College Business School and the United Nations Development Programme.

The Centre leads initiatives such as the *Music and Parental Wellbeing Alliance*, which is transforming global understanding of how music supports family health, and where research has inspired programmes such as *Breathe Melodies for Mums*, now actively changing lives across the UK, Europe and Asia. It also drives groundbreaking research into musicians' health and wellbeing, developing innovative approaches to training that empower performers to reach their full potential. Through its leadership of *Healthy Conservatoires*, a network uniting institutions and practitioners to share research and best practice, the Centre is enhancing the health and sustainability of performing arts communities worldwide.

Through pioneering projects such as these, alongside the world's first MSc in Performance Science, the Royal College of Music's Centre for Performance Science continues to set the global standard for performance research and education, uniting scientific insight with artistic excellence to enhance lives and transform the future of performance.

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For press enquiries please contact:

Talia Hull at the Royal College of Music: talia.hull@rcm.ac.uk

Photos can be downloaded [here](#).

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world-leading music conservatoire where 900 undergraduate and postgraduate students are taught in a creative environment informed by heritage and driven by innovation. In 2025 the Royal College of Music was ranked the Global No. 1 institution for Performing Arts and Music for the fourth year running in the QS World University Rankings by Subject.

RCM graduates forge extraordinary careers across the global music landscape. Many also thrive in diverse roles across the wider creative sector and beyond, showcasing the versatility and impact of an RCM education.

The Royal College of Music has trained some of the most important figures in music including composers and performers such as Sir Thomas Allen, Benjamin Britten, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Dame Sarah Connolly, Sir Colin Davis, Gustav Holst, Lord Lloyd Webber, Sir Neville Marriner, Anna Meredith MBE, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

As a leading centre for innovation and research, students benefit from the Royal College of Music Library with manuscripts by Mozart, Elgar and Holst and the Royal College of Music Museum with over 14,000 musical items, and on-site collections. Our flourishing Junior College and community programme enables hundreds of talented young students from diverse backgrounds to access high-quality music education.

www.rcm.ac.uk

About the Centre for Performance Science

The Centre for Performance Science (CPS) takes a strongly interdisciplinary approach to investigating performance, accessing expertise and facilities across the Royal College of Music and Imperial College London. Originally founded in 2000 at the Royal College of Music, the CPS has become an internationally distinctive centre for research, teaching and knowledge exchange in music performance science. In 2015, it opened a new chapter in performance science: a cross-institutional partnership between the Royal College of Music and Imperial College London.

Performance is at the very core of progress in the arts, business, education, medicine, science and sport. Increasingly, new methods and technologies are emerging that allow us to understand better how and why we perform and the reasons we find great performances so compelling.

The Centre for Performance Science is an ambitious collaboration aimed at tackling major challenges of performance across a wide array of domains. The Royal College of Music and Imperial College are uniquely positioned to undertake this activity, with partnerships spanning the arts, medicine, engineering, natural sciences, and business. The vision is that by understanding how skilled performers meet the distinctive challenges of their work, often under intense stress and public scrutiny, performance will serve both as a source of inspiration and a rich resource for research.

www.performancescience.ac.uk

About the Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education

The Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education are part of the UK national honours system, recognising at the highest level of state outstanding work in universities and colleges. The Prizes are open to eligible universities and colleges of higher and further education in the United Kingdom, and may be awarded for any topic or subject area which fulfils the criteria for the award: excellence, innovation and well-evidenced benefit for the institution itself and the wider world.

First awarded in 1994, the Prizes are granted every two years by the Sovereign on the advice of the Prime Minister following a rigorous and independent process of review carried out by the Royal

Anniversary Trust, an independent charity. The winners of the sixteenth round were announced at St James's Palace on 25 November, 2025; the Prizes will be presented at an investiture ceremony in February 2026. The Prizes were formerly known as the Queen's Anniversary Prizes.

www.royalanniversarytrust.org.uk