

RCM Artistic Strategy 2012

Update June 2021

Introduction – June 2021



In the nine years since the first RCM Artistic Strategy was adopted, there have been significant shifts in the music performing world. In particular, there have been two recent wide-ranging changes in the performing landscape. The shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had an acute and catastrophic effect on live music-making, continues severely to limit performance and concert promotion, with only recent signs of a possibility of returning to pre-pandemic activity within the next year. There has also been a seismic shift in the international world and the UK's political and trading relationship with its nearest neighbours in Europe. This looks to be likely to have a sizeable effect on professional touring from the UK to Europe, limiting performing activities and opportunities, and thus employment for musicians.

In the last years, there has also been a welcome and positive cultural shift, with the long-overdue reassessment of the artistic mainstream, and a rapid and invigorating rebalancing of approaches to inclusivity and diversity in repertoire and performers. There have also been notable changes in the way that music is performed and presented, particularly through technology, and a new strategy will need to reflect these.

The College's aspirations continue to widen, and its responsibilities for fostering open access to all sectors of society become ever more vital. There are many gaps to fill, and the College can only address a part of these. Strategic partnerships, advocacy and leadership become essential, and within the Artistic Strategy there need to be access points and significant points of contact beyond enrolled students.

Prior to a newly devised Artistic Strategy, to be developed in consultation with staff, students, and advisers from the music world, and adopted during 2021/22, the current Strategy has incorporated a few small updates to begin to encompass and represent some of these changes, to articulate more clearly aspirations and responsibilities, and guide thinking for the new Strategy as it is discussed and developed.

Artistic Strategy 2012

The Artistic Strategy for the RCM encompasses the wide and rich range of musical learning, performing, teaching, discovery and experimentation that takes place within its walls and beyond. It is focused not only on the near 700 students (*in 2012, now close to 950*) who make up the senior college student body, but on their professors, on the pre-college students in all their guises: Junior Department, RCM Sparks, on researchers and those working with the collections, on the wider public who engage with the College as audiences, supporters and life-time learners, and on the staff at the College who enable these things to develop and take place.

The Artistic Strategy leads and directs the context in which decisions are made on the performing life of the College, and has to be integrated fully into the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Such a holistic approach provides a clear and inspirational lead to full-time students and to learners of all ages connected with the College, and guides their personal development, assists their curiosity in their chosen subject, and connects them to the full range of resources available.

The strategy allows decision-makers within the College to make strong and informed choices about the opportunities that should be pursued in the performing life of the College. It should ensure both that no area is unjustly neglected, and also that all students are able to follow a relevant and personal course towards their own goals.

The Artistic Strategy drives all activities through the individual faculties, Performance and Programming and all concert and event organising teams within the RCM, and is also an important driver for the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the Research strategies.

The Artistic Strategy recognises that students' instruction during their time at the RCM will exist on many levels, and that the balance is sought which allows for sufficient time for individual learning and practice, coupled with relevant and explicit learning in all performances – solo and chamber through to large orchestral, opera, and chorus. It also allows for varied outcomes for students depending on their skills and their primary area of study.

Finally, the Artistic Strategy embraces all levels of performance and activity, from developing artists to the celebration and promotion of the highest level of excellence – the standards to which we all aspire.

Stephen Johns
Artistic Director
May 2012

1. OBJECTIVES

(i) To help the Royal College of Music to achieve its core mission:

RCM Mission statement

The Royal College of Music provides specialised musical education and professional training at the highest international level for performers and composers, within an environment that stimulates innovation and research. This enables talented students from all backgrounds to develop the musical skills, knowledge, understanding and resourcefulness which will equip them to contribute significantly to musical life in this country and internationally.

(ii) To enable students to develop relevant and professional musical skills as outlined in the RCM Strategic Plan 2007-2017:

The RCM's artistic vision is designed to:

- Foster a critical approach to musical endeavour and enable students to articulate their love of music in both sound and words
- Create a robust forward artistic planning process that includes concerts and operatic performances in concert halls and opera houses within and beyond London as a regular feature, along with new media channels
- Establish a distinctive focus on the music of the present to enhance the awareness for students of the needs and functions of music in contemporary society
- Establish opportunities for students to contextualise their performances across a range of styles by reference to *other* practice and practitioners
- Develop a transformative climate in which student initiative, experimentation and risk-taking are acknowledged as routes for exploring creativity and musical expression

Fostering a critical approach: The RCM encourages the building and delivery of performance programmes which recognise and respond to the musical and cultural context of works, and creates the opportunities for performers to engage with audiences in a variety of styles and formats.

Creating a robust forward artistic planning process: The RCM plans events through each academic year and in longer cycles of two and four years to provide the widest opportunities for students across the institution, and also provides the context across genres and faculties to enhance learning and understanding. The RCM also seeks to extend its performances outside its home both to provide professional skills and experience for its students and also to promote the brand and display the excellence of its performers to a wider audience.

Establishing a distinctive focus on the music of the present: The RCM recognises its important role as a home for innovation and contemporary practice. It can provide a centre for experimentation and discovery that is less possible in more commercial environments. The RCM acknowledges that only by continually pushing the boundaries of contemporary work can all its activities be viewed in context, and fresh thinking be applied to all musical study.

Establishing opportunities for students to contextualise their performances: The RCM is rich in resources that illuminate musical and *cultural* context. Through innovative and thematic programming, specialist instruction and through close alignment with Learning and Teaching at the RCM all opportunities will be taken to engender a spirit of discovery for students and understanding of performance practices both past and present.

Developing a transformative climate: The artistic programme is designed to allow a variety of opportunities for students to experiment in musical and presentational formats and to work with music and musicians from a broad spectrum. The RCM provides a safe and supportive environment for innovative work, without the commercial pressures and risks of the professional music world.



RCM in 2027

The Royal College of Music provides music education and professional training at the highest international level, through commitment to the transformative power of music and its own founding principles of excellence, advocacy and access. As a natural first choice for the most talented students from around the world, RCM is consistently recognised as an international leader developing versatile, innovative and influential creators, communicators and curators within the world of music and beyond. It embraces the ideals of an inclusive, open and just society, supporting students from diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. It fulfils its obligation as a relevant, persuasive and world-leading advocate for the future of music, as an agent for positive and meaningful cultural change.

RCM - a 10-year vision for the RCM, refreshed 2021

2. SCOPE

The Artistic Strategy:

- Develops and nurtures an artistic environment
- Provides context and framework for all activities
- Encourages exposure and engagement with excellence
- Encourages personal growth and development
- Encourages collaborations across disciplines
- Provides opportunity for innovation
- Prepares for the professional life

All proposed activities at the RCM are assessed according to how they benefit the following:

- Student experience
- Audience development and outreach work
- Research and knowledge exchange
- Student recruitment
- Fundraising and development
- Commercial opportunity
- RCM Brand

These criteria allow us to gauge the value of the work we undertake. If there is no particular benefit in any of these areas, then it is likely that the activity, however worthy in itself, should not take precedence in the artistic programme.

The artistic strategy promotes and celebrates creativity at all levels and in all combinations. It is primarily articulated through two complementary routes – one-to-one and faculty-based teaching, and artistic programming. These two combine to deepen and broaden the students', and all other stakeholders' (professors, staff, audiences) experience, skills and knowledge.

One to one and faculty-based teaching

Fundamental to teaching at the RCM is the 1:1 relationship between professor and pupil. The aims are:

- To acquire the essential tools of technique to express oneself clearly
- To deepen understanding of repertoire, genre and style
- To develop musical and artistic expression to the highest level
- To place in a wider context the individual learning experience

Faculty-based teaching includes:

- Faculty classes
- Masterclasses
- Faculty events

Artistic programming

The RCM actively pursues and promotes a rich and varied performance programme. Priorities:

- Carefully graded, managed and coherently planned
- Gives opportunity and exposure to the widest range of styles and genres
- Celebrates and promotes diversity amongst performers and performances
- Actively encourages exploration and promotion of music by under-represented composers
- Provides resources and opportunities for diversifying the repertoire
- Provides creative opportunities for experimentation
- Showcases and shares excellence
- Is reactive to opportunity
- Balances the needs of individuals
- Places performers in appropriate circumstances
- Depends on input from all sections and stakeholders at the RCM
- Encourages collaboration
- Links learning, teaching, research, collections and other resources
- Is closely aligned with professional standards and practices
- Acts as a gateway to the professional life
- Equips students with the skills and experience to challenge the status quo in the professional world, in programming and performance

The artistic strategy provides the structure for the development of the individual. It recognises that only with a combination of individual learning and group activity, supplemented by engagement with relevant resources, can the individual musician fully realise their potential. The balance at any one time of the needs of the individual has to be carefully planned and monitored.

The artistic strategy provides the space for individual achievement, through solo instruction and performance.

The artistic strategy provides for all stakeholders to contribute. Through the wide-ranging performance programme there are opportunities for students, professors and staff to devise, develop, promote and perform concerts and other events.

The artistic strategy supports the aspirations of the RCM as a world-leading centre, with the highest international standards and outlook. International partnerships and relationships are central to the thinking and planning.

The artistic strategy encompasses all who come in to contact with the RCM. This includes Junior College, Sparks, life-long learners, sponsors and supporters and audiences.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 Artistic programme
- 3.2 Artistic overview (themes and context)
 - 3.2.1 Artistic programming – diversity and inclusion
- 3.3 Annual template
- 3.4 Performance programme
 - 3.4.1 Solo strategy
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 - 3.4.3 Large ensemble strategy
 - 3.4.4 Opera strategy
 - 3.4.5 Contemporary music
 - 3.4.6 Historical Performance
 - 3.4.7 Choral Music
- 3.5 Experimentation and discovery
- 3.6 Preparation for the profession
- 3.7 Box-office and artistic programming
- 3.8 Partnerships
- 3.9 Integration of the artistic programme, the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement strategy, and the Research strategy
- 3.10 Widening the strategy
- 3.11 Performance spaces

3.1 Artistic programme

The RCM promotes an artistic programme to give the widest range of opportunity to students to develop their performance skills. The programme looks to place students in environments where clear and distinctive learning will take place. It will showcase and celebrate excellence. There will be clarity about the expectations at each level, and what is intended to be achieved in each activity.

The programme will be a result of collaborative planning from across the RCM, under the specific guidance of the Artistic Director, via the Artistic Planning Committee, comprising the Director, the Heads of Faculty, Director of Opera, and the Directors of Programmes and Research. Input and collaboration is sought and encouraged from stakeholders across the RCM, including all staff, professors and students.

3.2 Artistic overview (themes and context)

Providing themes on a termly or yearly basis is a simple way of bringing cohesion to a performing programme, and enhancing the sense of context for students and audiences for the works that are being performed. It also encourages a close integration with teaching and learning through the academic programmes, and for the integration and promotion of the RCM collections.

Further longer-term planning allows for students on two and four year study periods to be sure to have been exposed to all the major genres and works, giving them a secure grounding as they enter the profession.

Consultation will take place regularly, and primarily through the Artistic Planning Committee, between the Director, the Artistic Director, Heads of Faculty, Opera, Heads of Programmes and other promoting groups within the RCM (including RCM Museum, Creative Careers Centre, Music and Ideas, etc) to agree and communicate long-term themed planning.

Themes can be broad-based – covering a whole term's events - and also short term and focused on particular areas e.g. chamber music. The intention is to provide a framework on which to build a varied series of events. There are advantages to students whose experience will be enhanced by the context provided, and to RCM audience development, outreach and brand development.

3.2.1 Artistic programming – diversity and inclusion

Artistic programming at the RCM will take a pro-active approach to celebrate and promote diversity amongst performers and performances. The exploration and promotion of music by under-represented composers will be a priority. This will be achieved through a number of initiatives:

- Reworked and updated core repertoire lists for RCM Ensembles
- Dedicated programme opportunities, including festivals and series
- Continuing development and publication of resources: scores, recordings etc
- Commitment to representative balance for leaders of performance projects
- Active inclusion of music by under-represented composers in all projects

Above all, music included in performances will be judged on the artistic merit of the work, its suitability for the performers, relevant to their technical capabilities, and the educational opportunity it provides.

3.3 Annual template

An annual template allows the artistic programme to mirror the learning and teaching at the RCM. The broad principle is one of training and observation developing through the year to the showcasing of excellence achieved.

Students have to balance many priorities during their time at the RCM. Fundamental is their personal practice, learning and performance on their principal study. The performance programme has to allow for the space for the individual where necessary, but to balance this with the collective needs of the body of students, and so an annual programme has to be sensitive to the workload.

Respect is given to the often exceptional learning environment that can be provided for in ensemble work, and the value of these experiences in preparing for the profession.

Autumn Term – training

Spring Term – performing

Summer Term – showcasing excellence

Further details of the current implementation of this strategy is in appendix 1

3.4 Performance programme

There are separate strategies for each performing area of the RCM, and these cover:

- Solo performers
- Chamber music
- Large ensembles
- Opera
- Contemporary music
- Historical performance
- Choral music

In all these areas the artistic programme is driven by:

- Preparation for the profession
- Contemporary practice and current trends
- Music in context – performance practice (historical and contemporary)
- Experimentation and discovery

3.4.1 Solo performers

Opportunities from solo performances to concertos are provided through faculties and through the chamber music series. Solo performances are encouraged at all levels of the chamber music programme, and leadership and guidance and encouragement from Heads of Faculty and professors on suitable opportunities is crucial.

3.4.2 Chamber music

Central to the RCM is the opportunity for all students to be involved and instructed in chamber groups. Performance opportunities in a range of venues and series are carefully provided and monitored.

3.4.3 Large ensembles

Each large ensemble at the RCM has a distinct identity, and the composition and programming for each ensemble is closely tied to the educational needs of participants. Student participation in each large ensemble project is carefully considered by the relevant Heads of Faculty in conjunction with Performance and Programming and the Artistic Director to ensure reasonable workload and relevant learning experience.

3.4.4 Opera

A range of performances are available, from opera scenes through to full-scale opera productions both RCM-based and with professional partners. Consideration is always taken to providing the appropriate repertoire for developing voices. The Head of Vocal Studies and the Head of Opera, together with the Artistic Director,

3.4.5 Contemporary music

The performance of new and recent works is crucial to the skills and understanding and performance techniques of student performers, and to the visibility and opportunity of the student composers. Contemporary work is actively encouraged in all performances within the artistic programme, as are individual groups wishing to experiment and perform.

3.4.6 Historical performance

Historical performance can encompass practice right up to the present day, and is a fundamental part of the RCM mission for students to be able to contextualise their performances. A unified approach across Learning and Teaching, artistic programming, faculty studies and the RCM collections will bring great benefits and give students the breadth of knowledge and context to approach all music they perform with understanding and historical sensitivity.

3.4.7 Choral music

The development of choral skills is highly important, and not only for first-study vocal students. In addition to the annual symphonic chorus concert, new choral ensembles will be developed to help train the particular skills of vocal ensemble work.

Further details of the current implementation of these strategies are in appendix 2

3.5 Experimentation and Discovery

Within the carefully structured approach to learning at the RCM, room has to be made to allow students to discover their own artistic voice. The primary vehicle for experimentation and cross-genres performance is the Great Exhibitionists series, running *once* a year.

Further occasions for innovative presentation include the termly Chamber Music *programmes*, and the performance programme is always open to promote and support new ideas for repertoire and delivery. *Opportunities will also be made available for student-led concert planning and curation.*

3.6 Preparation for the profession

At the heart of all we do at the RCM, there must be instruction in preparing for the music profession, with skills that are additional to the technical and musical development on the student's chosen instrument.

Within the artistic programme, it is important that students cover the following areas:

- Repertoire across genres and historical periods
- Performance materials, including biographies and programme notes
- Platform presentation and manner
- Programming skills
- Ensemble training and disciplines, including chamber and larger ensembles
- Recording and related media performance skills
- Intensive rehearsal, sight-reading skills, particularly for large ensembles
- Touring disciplines
- Performing for *and leading*, education programmes

Teaching in these areas will take place both within the performance programme and within the learning and teaching programmes.

3.7 Box office and artistic programming

The RCM's mission is the education of its students – to enhance the student experience through the breadth and depth of its activities. The Artistic Programme is designed to be part of this educative process, and is necessarily different from that of a commercial arts organisation or arts centre. Through the variety of events that are planned, all areas of study can be covered. Certain events are always going to be more attractive to the public, but we are able to share any income from such events across the RCM in keeping with our support for each other within the organisation.

There are four general principles

- All events which are part of the artistic programme will be planned and budgeted for in the annual budget round
- All events are free to RCM students
- Public attendance at RCM events will be charged for in our licensed venues
- Box office income is always returned to general RCM income

Further details of this strategy is in appendix 3

3.8 Partnerships

Partners with the RCM allow a close working relationship with excellence in the music profession. Our partners will include:

- Artists in residence
 - Composers
 - Performers
 - Opera companies
- Prince Consort Professors and visiting Professors
- Orchestras
- Other institutions
- Local, national and international venues
- Promoters and Festivals

Further details of this strategy is in appendix 4

3.9 Integration of RCM strategies

The artistic strategy assumes an ever-closer collaboration between the learning and teaching programmes and the artistic programme. It is essential that there is alignment in

what we are teaching and what we are performing, to allow the students to gain breadth of vision and understanding. This multi-dimensional approach maximises our resources and informs all aspects of a subject for the student. An example of this approach could be

- Themed large ensemble performance
- Chamber ensemble of related repertoire
- Relevant musical history in student lectures
- Dedicated displays in the Museum
- Music and Ideas and other lecture events
- Multi-media displays in the RCM
- External partnerships – performance and learning

3.10 Widening the strategy

The strategy outlined thus far covers students at the senior college. Following are ideas of how the strategy may evolve to cover other parties who have close connections with the RCM, including:

- Pre-college – Junior Department, RCM Sparks
The strategy for pre-College is currently under discussion in a new plan for pre-18 provision. For the purposes of this artistic strategy, the following headlines are for noting:
Any pre-college agenda should address
 - sustainability of the senior college
 - current student experience (eg pedagogy)
 - widening access and participation
 - advancing the brand of the RCM
- Post-college/life-long learners
There are opportunities, through the *Creative Careers* Centre and other links with alumni, to involve ex-students more closely in the artistic life of the RCM. These could include:
 - Mentoring (including Great Exhibitionists series)
 - Short-term residencies
 - Chamber programmes with current and ex-student performers
 - Wider learning and participation strategies
- Wider learning and participation strategies
In future, the RCM could consider taking more of a role in the general promotion and education of music in the UK. This would broaden the reach to both amateurs and professionals, and help to shape the agenda of music education, promoting the RCM's values of excellence. Some possible headlines are:
 - Continual learning programmes for professional musicians
 - Music hub for secondary music education

- Immersion courses, both performance and research

3.11 Performance spaces

The policy for the performance spaces at the RCM is to ensure:

- that each space is acoustically as good as possible
- each space is able to be used as flexibly as possible
- each space provides a good visitor and audience experience
- each space is provided with instruments of quality, in the best condition

Programming for each of our venues will be sympathetic to the surroundings, enhancing the concert experience.

All the concert venues are available for concert promotion, and planning for concerts and venues will be integrated under the lead of the Artistic Director.

As far as is practicable, teaching in a concert venue should not displace or over-ride performance opportunities, if there are adequate teaching alternatives.

4. APPENDICES (2012) (SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT)

- 1 Annual template
- 2 Large ensembles
- 3 Box office and artistic programming
- 4 Partnerships
- 5 Orchestral repertoire list