

# Royal Northern College of Music Celebrates the Centenary of the Founding of the Royal Manchester College of Music

The following article has been kindly written by Dr. Colin Beesson, Director of Development at Manchester in response to our Editorial Policy of drawing attention to those establishments with which the Company has associations outside London.

There is an annual nomination from the RNCM for the Company's oldest Award which was inaugurated in 1889.

**ON MONDAY 2nd OCTOBER 1893, the Royal Manchester College of Music opened the doors of its premises in Ducie Street, off Oxford Road, as the first full-scale conservatoire in England, outside London.**

The first official record of student numbers reveals that 74 students registered in the first week with a preponderance, essentially maintained throughout the life of the RMCM, of students of singing and pianoforte.

By the year of its 21st birthday in 1914, student numbers had more than doubled to 167 under the principalship of Dr. Adolph Brodsky (appointed to succeed the first Principal, Sir Charles Hallé, on his death in 1895), a trend which was to continue for the next decade to reach 384 students by 1923. The latter half of the 20s, however, saw a steep decline in the student population due, in part, to the severe industrial depression at the time and in part, in the view of R.J. Forbes (appointed Principal on the death of Brodsky in 1929) to "... the mechanisation of music which has, for the time being, materially altered the prospects of so many professional musicians, especially orchestral players." Whilst numbers (and therefore income) may have dwindled during Brodsky's final years, the quality of individual students had not, with a whole clutch of future senior British orchestral leaders and principals, pianists, composers and singers being at the College during this time.

The period of R.J. Forbes's principalship took the RMCM through the war years and up to 1953. The post-war growth and regeneration of the RMCM's fortunes, already begun in Forbes's final years, was tackled head-on by his successor Frederick Cox such that the late 1950s once again revealed an era of exceptionally gifted students across all disciplines. Cox also negotiated a firmer financial base for the College with the Treasury, and reached agreement with the Ministry of Education and the Burnham Committee



*The Royal Manchester College of Music.*

on establishing four recognised College Diplomas.

By 1966, however, the idea first mentioned in Council minutes as early as 1954, of bringing together the RMCM and its Manchester-based neighbour, the Northern School of Music, received formal approval. Within seven short years the newly-named Royal Northern College of Music was built, opened and fully operational.

As a mark of tribute to the RMCM, the Royal Northern College of Music will be staging a re-creation of the first musical event held at the RMCM just five days after it opened. This was a 'Conversazione' – a reception, at which the guests were treated to a programme of music (ranging from Handel, through Schubert, Chopin and Schumann, to Brahms, Bizet, Bruch and Grieg) performed by members of the teaching staff.

This fascinating re-creation will take place at the RNCM on Saturday 9th October at 7.30 p.m. and will (as in 1893) feature members of the College's tutorial staff as performers. Tickets (price £6.00) are available from the RNCM Box Office (Tel. 061-273 4504). All proceeds will be given to the RNCM Alumni Association to help further its work in promoting links between former students of the RNCM, RMCM and NSM. There will also be an exhibition of RMCM memorabilia, and an illustrated souvenir brochure will be on sale.

## THE COMPANY DIARY to 30th April 1994

ITEMS IN BLUE ITALICS DENOTE  
LIVERY CLUB EVENTS

29 Sept	Common Hall.
5 Oct	Master and Wardens' Committee.
13 Oct	Court and Dinner.
27 Oct	Maisie Lewis Recital.
10 Nov	Installation Court and Dinner.
17 Nov	St. Cecilia Festival Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral.
24 Nov	Festival of St. Cecilia and Royal Concert.
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6 Jan	Master and Wardens' Committee. Special Awards Committee.
19 Jan	Court.
26 Jan	<i>Livery Club President's Event.</i>
10 Mar	Maise Lewis Recital.
Mar	<i>Opera Evening at Guildhall School of Music.</i>
Mar	Master and Wardens' Committee.
18 Mar	United Guilds Service.
13 Apr	Court Dinner.