

RPS AMBACHE FUND



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APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Women have always played a central, creative role in the story of music. Only lately has the modern world started to recognise and embrace this. Gradually, outstanding and inspiring music by women – often overlooked for decades, even centuries – is finding its rightful place onstage. This is a time of rich and rewarding discovery, for performers to excavate jewels from history to brighten their repertoire, and for audiences to embrace so many wonders just waiting to be cherished.

A true pioneer in all this is the musician **Diana Ambache** who, around 40 years ago, set about raising awareness and engagement for music composed by women throughout the ages. In this mission, Diana established the **Ambache Charitable Trust** which has done so much to raise the profile of women composers and help get their music heard. Previously a registered charity in itself, we are delighted in agreement with Diana and her fellow Trustees to have made a new home for this venture here at the Royal Philharmonic Society, as the **RPS Ambache Fund**. Our own work addressing gender inequality in classical music is renowned through our RPS Conductors programme which has given hundreds of women the chance to attain their rightful place on the conducting podium. We are proud that in our commissions of new music today, we achieve parity for women among the living composers we support. The spirit of the Ambache Charitable Trust also allies with our own charitable object of fostering public curiosity and engagement in the treasures of classical music. With the funds it has bestowed at the RPS, over several years, we annually offer a number of grants to encourage UK-based performers, ensembles, venues and festivals to put exceptional yet overlooked music by historic women composers at the heart of their programming, and take pride in telling audiences about such composers worth discovering. We trust this will not only be valued fuel for music-makers; we look forward to telling music-lovers about the initiatives we support, opening their ears to captivating music they have likely not heard before.

We announced our first grants from the RPS Ambache Fund in August 2026, which you can read about on our website here, and applications are now open for 2027.

Full details of who can apply and how to apply follow in these guidelines. The **closing date** for applications is 11am on **Wednesday 31 March 2027**.

If you may like this information in a different format, for accessibility reasons, In the first instance please contact Emily Porter, RPS Administrator, by phone on 020 7287 0019 or email at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk.



Diana Ambache and the Ambache Charitable Trust

Diana Ambache MBE is a musical pioneer. A pianist since early childhood, she played her first Mozart Piano Concerto at Sheffield University, and went on to establish the Ambache Chamber Orchestra in 1984 to play more of them. In the course of this, she discovered an unknown piano concerto by the French composer Germaine Tailleferre in 1985, and has dedicated herself to researching, performing, recording and publicising music by women ever since. Before anyone else in the UK created such a resource, she established the website Women of Note to foster greater interest in an array historic women composers, and she has devotedly told their stories in broadcasts for BBC Radio and Classic FM. The path she has forged has been vital to so many others in their own efforts to illuminate and programme women composers. In recognition of this, Diana was shortlisted for the 2002 European Women of Achievement Awards, and awarded an MBE in the 2026 Birthday Honours List.

After inheriting a valuable violin, Diana founded the Ambache Charitable Trust in 2013, to raise the profile of historical music composed by women and to support projects promoting this music to the widest possible audience. In this, it has achieved so much: supporting concerts, opera productions, festivals, tours, numerous first-time recordings, educational workshops, symposia, and the restoration and publication of scores for use by today's musicians. A key initiative has been the Association of British Orchestras' Sirens, made possible thanks to the Trust. Over the course of a decade, this scheme encouraged numerous professional orchestras to programme more music by women throughout history, positively transforming the culture, so such composers are now more readily heard on the UK stage.

Applying for the RPS Ambache Fund

This year, we expect to offer a total of around £16,000 in grants, likely split between 3 or 4 recipients, with **grants in the region of £3,000 to £5,000 each**. At this level, we do not expect grants to cover your performance plans outright, but represent a useful contribution to help you present and promote music by historic women composers notably in forthcoming concerts, across a season, or in a festival.

The **closing date** for is 11am on **Wednesday 31 March 2027**. We regret we cannot consider applications received after this. We expect to let applicants know outcomes in July 2027.

Who can apply?

This fund exists to support historic composers who can no longer promote themselves. Naturally therefore, applications should persuasively illustrate how they would significantly transform regard for the composers they feature. To fulfil this, applicants for this particular fund should be **well established** UK-based ensembles, solo performers, or organisations that produce classical music performances in the UK, **with a proven profile and substantial**

following. If you are relatively new to the profession as a performer or a recently-formed group, or your project is likely to draw only a modest audience, we recommend you don't apply at this stage, owing to expected competition.

If you have already received any kind of funding from the RPS within three years of the closing date (since March 2024), we ask you not to apply at this time, but if eligible you may do so in a future year once that period has expired.

At the RPS, we are proud to adopt Sound and Music's Fair Access Principles and are signed up to the Keychange initiative, dedicated to achieving 50:50 parity of marginalised genders in those we support. We warmly welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, particularly under-represented demographics. If you feel that any part of our offer – or the experience in applying for it – could inhibit you or another candidate from applying, please do let us know (our contact details are below) and we will be happy to address this.

What can be funded?

Grants are for initiatives that involve the programming and performance in the UK of music by historic women composers, in concerts, across a season, or in a festival. While we are pleased whenever some kind of recording for posterity can be factored into plans, this year's applications should entail some form of public performance.

The activity you propose should be new to you: not further performances of music you have already done. If you applied to the RPS Ambache Fund before and were unsuccessful, we ask that you apply with something new, not the same project. As we only expect to notify applicants of outcomes in July 2027, we recommend that your intended performances do not take place before September 2027.

By 'historic' women composers, we mean women composers from any stage in history who are no longer alive. For clarity, this fund is not for new commissions or to support works by living composers, given other resources and initiatives which already exist for them. The composers may be of any nationality.

With this fund, we are particularly keen to engage audiences with music by historic women composers, fostering their curiosity to the extent that they follow those composers and others from history with fresh inclination. Intrinsic to your plans, and what you tell us in your application, should be a clear sense of how – beyond simply programming the music – you aim to achieve this legacy. In this, give thought to how you would *creatively* promote the music and composer, beyond conventional marketing measures such as basic social media posts and advertising, and how you might draw on digital and audiovisual possibilities in this storytelling.

To effectively raise the profile of the featured composers, projects likely to receive grants will be particularly substantial, imaginative and original. For example, we are unlikely to support applications that comprise just one small piece in one concert, unless you reason the exceptional worth of this and what you would do surrounding the performance for it to enduringly resonate with audiences. We will always be pleased to hear applicants express how the music they programme, or the commitment they have demonstrated in their proposal, will assume some kind of lasting place in their future ventures.

Your plans can involve one or more historic women composers, but keep in mind – and tell us in your application – how you would meaningfully communicate their name, artistry, and story if you choose to feature multiple figures in your proposal.

You may already have a strong idea of the composer(s) you wish to celebrate in your plans. We encourage you to take time to look at what music by historic women composers is already being performed, recorded and broadcast: we are particularly keen with this fund to go *beyond this* and support works that have not yet significantly found their way to today's audiences. There are hundreds of works like this to embrace. Online there are fantastic resources you can consult to fire your imagination, including:

Women of Note is Diana Ambache's own website which showcases a great range of historic women composers, and features significant lists of works that deserve to be heard.

Donne Foundation does much year-round to raise the profile of women composers, and its website features The Big List of 5,000+ composers worth discovering, compiled in successive centuries.

Musicalics presents a visual timeline of notable women composers, spanning almost a millennium from Hildegard von Bingen to the year 2000.

Wikipedia's ever-increasing list of women composers is a useful starting point for boundless discoveries.

New Muses Project is an American website where, if you type in the name of a composer you admire, it will propose a less familiar composer – and usually a woman composer – whose music you may equally enjoy.

As detailed below, in your application, we ask you to complete our budget template illustrating the key costs of your project. You do not need to assign our grant to specific elements of this; we will give grants as a general contribution towards the costs of fulfilling successful applicants' proposals.

How to apply

Applicants are required to complete our online application form, or elect another person to do so on their behalf if needed. We encourage you to take time and care in completing the application form to ensure it represents you well.

About you and your plans

In the form, you will first be asked to tell us some basic information about yourself / your ensemble / your organisation (with details of a primary contact) and provide links to an online biography or equivalent (on your own website or another platform) so we can read more about your achievements to date, and to a sample of some footage or audio of you recently performing. You will next be asked several questions, detailed below. Please write in the first person and provide answers tailored to this application, not copied from other contexts. We recommend that you draft answers offline in a Word document or similar, which you can save, and copy and paste your answers into the online form when you are ready to submit. Each answer has a maximum word count of 150 words: we encourage you to supply clear, concise facts, and you may wish to present these in bullet points to save on words.

1. Tell us about your recent performances and programming.

Give us a short summary of your recent performances and programmes, what made them successful and distinctive, with some quantitative and/or qualitative insights on the audiences that they drew. If you have already championed historic women composers have in your work to date, you may wish to refer briefly to this here.

2. Tell us the name(s) of the composer(s) and title(s) of work(s) you intend to perform, central to your proposal.

You may not know the full details yet, but tell us what you can. We discourage applications where you have not made at least some firm decisions regarding this. We expect this to be a simple list, for example:
Claudette Wolfe – Sonatine for flute and piano; Wind Quintet no.2 / Barbara Deauville – Vesper for flute

3. Tell us your plans for performing your chosen composer(s) and work(s).

We are looking for applicants with wholehearted passion to bring historic women composers and their music to new audiences. Tell us why you have chosen the work(s) you have and the context in which you intend to feature them. While plans may be somewhat provisional at this stage, give as much clear information as you can about performances you are planning that will include the music, with dates and venues where known.

4. Tell us what else you would do around the performances to generate profile and to capture a significant audience's enduring interest.

We want your endeavours to find a big audience. Though plans will still be taking shape, let us know what aspirations you have for creatively promoting the music and composer(s) beyond conventional marketing measures, and how you might draw on digital and audiovisual possibilities to achieve your storytelling here. We are particularly looking for clear and distinctive ideas here that you can practically fulfil.

If you prefer to answer these questions in a filmed format, you should provide a link to one short film in which all the above is addressed, not exceeding a total of 4 minutes in duration. We anticipate this will mostly entail the applicant talking to camera. This need not be high-quality and we welcome it being filmed on a smartphone or similar. This should be submitted as an unlisted link to YouTube or an equivalent platform, and the footage should remain visible there until July 2027. You may supply a link to footage that is password-protected, but please ensure to include any passwords with your link, if applicable, in the application form.

Budget

Applicants must complete our simple budget template (which you can download here) then upload this in your application form. In your budget, you should specify the size of grant you would ideally hope to receive from us, and itemise all the key elements of the project and their likely costs, to give us a reassuring picture that your proposal can be fulfilled. We do not expect that our grant will cover your project costs outright so in the budget document you are asked to provide some commentary (up to 150 words) on what other steps you are taking/will take to cover your costs.

Finally, the application form invites you to take a moment to answer some standard inclusivity monitoring questions. Doing this is so helpful to us all collectively in classical music. We are committed to working with colleagues sector-wide to ensure we are representing excellence, creativity and innovation in music-making within a diverse, multicultural society.

Thank you for playing your part in this. The information you provide in your application will only be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy as found on our website.

Applications open on the RPS website in October 2026 and the closing date is 11am on **Wednesday 31 March 2027**. If for access reasons or exceptional personal circumstances, you may not be able to submit an application by the closing date, please be in touch to discuss the possibility of a short extension to make your submission. In the first instance, please contact Emily Porter, RPS Administrator, by phone on 020 7287 0019 or email at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk.

Next steps

After the closing date, applications will be read with care by RPS management, in consultation with Diana Ambache and a further guest expert. Thank you for your patience as we fulfil this. We aim to let all applicants know outcomes in July 2027.

Those we can support will be given a grant offer letter. It may be that we can only grant you a portion of what you asked for. In this instance, you will need to confirm that you can still fulfil your plans with this before accepting. Once the terms of the letter have been formally accepted by you, payment of the grant will be made to your bank account, usually in two instalments. We will agree a timeframe with you for when we pay the instalments based on your plans.

You will be expected around your performance(s), and also online, to acknowledge the support of the RPS Ambache Fund. A set of guidelines for such acknowledgement will be presented to recipients with our grant offer.

Our small management team will take great pride in doing what we can to support you and help raise awareness of your plans. From time to time, we will ask you to account your progress to us, not least for us to share with Diana Ambache. We may also ask you to create some content – such as a short written or simply filmed account – of your initiative, or come to the RPS office to be filmed, for us to share with RPS Members and supporters, and with a wider audience to foster greater interest in your music.

If you would like any guidance in making an application, or to establish if your plans are eligible for consideration, please get in touch. In the first instance please contact Emily Porter, RPS Administrator, by or phone on 020 7287 0019 or email at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk.

Thank you for your interest in the RPS and best wishes for your application.

Front cover, pictured row by row, just some of the many women composers through history whose music should be better known today: Germaine Tailleferre, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, Elizabeth Maconchy, Avril Coleridge-Taylor / Florence Price, Louise Talma, Augusta Holmès, Madeleine Dring, Grace Williams / Ina Boyle, Leonora Duarte, Grażyna Bacewicz, Morfydd Owen, Margaret Bonds / Ruth Gipps, Johanna Müller-Hermann, Julie Candeille, Leokadiya Kashperova, Marie Grandval / Cacilda Borges Barbosa, Ester Mägi, Dorothy Howell, Elfrida Andrée, Maria von Paradis / Ingebord Bronsart, Undine Smith Moore, Pauline Viardot, Cécile Chaminade, Marianna Martines / Wilhelmine von Bayreuth, Doreen Carwithen, Yoshida Takako, Amy Beach, Helen Hopekirk