



RPS JULIUS ISSERLIS SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2026

Musicians often benefit from the experience of studying in a different country, drawing from a change of settings and fresh expertise. The Royal Philharmonic Society is pleased to offer young musicians resident in the UK a life-changing opportunity to study abroad, be it to take lessons from a specialist based overseas or to fulfil a course at an international music school or university. This is possible thanks to the RPS Julius Isserlis Scholarship which was generously bequeathed by Cecilia Helen Northcote to us some decades ago, and at her wish is dedicated to the inspirational Russian pianist, composer and teacher Julius Isserlis.

The RPS Isserlis Scholarship has helped countless musicians in many different ways over the years. Percussionist Rebecca Burch travelled to Ghana to collaborate with local musicians and learn indigenous repertoire, and trumpeter Imogen Whitehead flew to Oslo for an intensive spell of lessons and masterclasses with Norway's top players. Clarinettist Mebrakh Haughton-Johnson has undertaken postgraduate study at The Juilliard School in New York City, USA, and cellist Sophie Kauer has taken lessons with renowned cellist Torleif Thedeén at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo.

We hope the prospect of such funding encourages you to think imaginatively about what musical development you could pursue overseas. Funds granted can only be given for plans agreed with the RPS, but we appreciate that in these circumstances some modification to these may prove necessary as things progress. We don't want current circumstances to deter you from applying and encourage you to contact us should you have any queries or issues regarding this.

The following Application Guidelines are a step-by-step guide to submitting an application and all that follows. Please read them carefully before applying, and continue to consult them throughout the process.

If do you have any queries, you can contact our Administrator Emily Porter at emily@philharmonicsociety.uk or call us 020 7287 0019.

WHO CAN APPLY

All classical instrumentalists and vocalists of any nationality between the ages of 15 and 25, who are permanently resident and have the right to work in the UK. This fund is for musicians resident in the UK wishing to study overseas. We are unable to accept applications to fund study within the UK.

As a charity, we are keen to support a wide range of musicians and initiatives. If you have already received any kind of funding from the RPS within three years of the closing date (since

18 February 2023) 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.

WHAT WE OFFER

This year, we expect to offer a total of £25,000 from the RPS Julius Isserlis Scholarship to young instrumentalists and vocalists to study abroad for up to two years. This will be split between a number of musicians, as decided by the selection panel. Typical grants can range from as little as £500, up to £7,500. In the budget section of your application, you will be asked to tell us how much you may ideally like from the RPS. Given our panel aims to support several applicants each year, some they are able to offer the full amount requested, and some a contribution towards this.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

There is no entry fee so it is free for eligible candidates to apply. If you are shortlisted for audition in London, you would need to cover your own travel expenses and the cost of an accompanist should you need one.

CLOSING DATE

The closing date is **11am on Wednesday 18 February 2026**. We regret we cannot consider any applications received after that time.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications should be submitted via the form on the [RPS website](#). The application will require the following, which we explain in more detail below:

- basic contact details
- answers to the two questions detailed below
- an uploaded budget document (template can be downloaded below)
- a reference submitted by your referee before the application closing date
- footage of you playing two contrasting pieces

In the application form you will be asked to submit some basic information about you. Here, you will be asked to provide your fixed residential address in the UK. If you are currently a student living away from home in higher education, this should be the address of your family home. You will also be asked to confirm that you have the right to work in the UK for the next two years and also to confirm your age as it will be on the closing date of 18 February 2026.

You will be asked the following key questions, and may answer in up to 200 words per question:

1. In just a few sentences, give us a picture of your musical studies, progress and career to date.

Please include any key years - for example: Junior RNCM (2013-16), NYO (2016) - and the name of your current instrumental teacher.

2. In a few sentences, tell us your plan for studying abroad and how you feel you would benefit from this.

We ask you to provide as much clear detail as you can at this stage, including place of study, likely dates and teachers. Let us know if any elements have been provisionally offered or confirmed, and where you are in any application process. Do include detail illustrating why you believe it will be of vital worth to you at this stage, and how this would positively impact your future career aspirations in the UK.

We appreciate that your plans may change during the application and audition process, so please do keep us updated as necessary. We anticipate your intended planned activity to have begun no later than two years after the closing date for applications. Where your planned activity includes multiple trips abroad (such as a series of lessons with a particular teacher) we encourage you to consider the sustainability of your travel plans in your application to reduce impact on the environment. **Please note that we are not able to fund overseas study that has already begun at the time of application.**

BUDGET

We also ask you to complete our simple budget template (which you can [download here](#)) outlining likely **costs** of study, accommodation, travel, subsistence and other such things, and any **funds** such as savings, grants, income or other financial means you may have or hope to draw upon to help fulfil your plans. Here you will also be asked to tell us how much you would ideally like from the RPS. Take care to ensure your budget balances, with expected income matching expected expenditure, not falling significantly short or being funded more than you need to fulfil your plans.

Once complete, you should upload your budget to our online application form. There is also space in the form to share anything further about your financial situation not included in your budget. Here you can also account, if the costs in your budget are considerably more than the funds listed, how you hope to address the difference.

REFERENCE

You will be asked to provide the name and email address of a referee (such as your teacher) who can write a short reference, stating how they know you and why they believe you deserve this support for your plans. You will need ask them to send this by email to admin@philharmonicsociety.uk to arrive **no later than the closing date**. In the subject heading of the email, they should simply write 'Isserlis reference for' followed by your name. It is your responsibility to ensure this reference is sent to us by the closing date. We can only consider applications for which we have a submitted reference by the closing date.

FOOTAGE

Lastly, you will need to supply some recent footage of yourself which demonstrates a versatile, varied and strong musical character, complying with the requirements below:

3. We would like to see you play two pieces by contrasting composers: these can be complete works or complete movements of works.
4. These should be solo pieces and – with the exception of harp, percussion or piano applicants – at least one of these pieces should feature piano/keyboard

accompaniment. Please only submit unaccompanied footage if the piece was written to be performed as such.

5. Footage should be filmed live, in one continuous take. It can be with or without an audience, using either one or more cameras, but not edited together from multiple performances. Do take time to ensure your footage shows your playing to its best advantage: avoid overly 'echoey' acoustics and ensure you can be seen clearly.
6. The two pieces can be submitted within the same film or as separate films. If you do not commence playing at the very start of either film, you must provide the time in minutes and seconds at which you do start playing each piece.
7. Filming must have occurred since September 2024 (you are asked to supply the date of filming in the application form).
8. Films should be submitted as links (public or unlisted) to YouTube, Vimeo or equivalent platforms. We regret we cannot accept footage in any other format. You may send links to films that are privately listed online if you prefer, but please ensure to include any passwords with your links in the application form.

INCLUSIVITY MONITORING

Across a range of our activities at the Royal Philharmonic Society, we invite participants and applicants aged 18 and over to complete some standard inclusivity monitoring questions, from a link that will be visible onscreen once you submit your application. The answers you give are confidential and will be reviewed separately from your application. Thank you for taking a moment to do this, it is so helpful to us all collectively in classical music.

The closing date for submission is 11am on Wednesday 18 February 2026.

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. We are continually striving to address how we can minimise barriers to the widest possible range of applicants and are proud to have adopted Sound and Music's [Fair Access Principles](#). We particularly welcome applications from under-represented demographics, such as those who are Black, Asian and ethnically diverse, those who are working class, and those who are disabled. If you sense that anything in these guidelines could deter you or another eligible candidate from applying, or if there's anything you'd like to talk to us about, please do get in touch using the contact details below. We would be happy to hear from you.

NEXT STEPS

We aim to notify you during the week commencing Monday 2 March, if you have been shortlisted to audition.

Auditions are set to take place in London on **Tuesday 14 April 2026**. If you are applying, please do pencil the audition date in your diary now, as we will not have scope to offer alternative dates or video auditions.

Here you will meet a small, friendly panel comprising key figures from the music profession.

Your audition will last approximately 20 minutes. In this, the panel will look forward to hearing you perform and will also take the time to have a short chat with you about your plans.

Though naturally we will not have time to hear them all, we ask you to prepare three pieces which clearly reflect your musical strengths, personality and interests, and cover a range of genres and styles. On the day, the panel will likely ask to hear an extract from each and possibly - if you are presenting a work with multiple movements - contrasting passages from the same piece.

Repertoire submitted in your application can be included in your final audition, but we also relish the chance to hear you perform other pieces too.

Soloists will need to bring their own accompanist to the audition.

After the audition, we aim to let you know the outcome within a few days.

FEEDBACK

As noted, we can only shortlist a number of applications for audition, and then only offer scholarships to a couple of successful candidates. There is considerable competition for this, so please do not be too disappointed if your application is unsuccessful. We endeavour to provide feedback that we feel will be useful to all applicants but owing to various commitments for our small team, it can sometimes be several weeks before we can send this. Thank you for your patience.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Payment of the grant will be made into your UK bank account, in two or more instalments. The RPS asks for a short written update on your progress before approving each instalment.

As a beneficiary of the Royal Philharmonic Society, we would ask that you reference the Scholarship in your biography and represent the Society whilst undertaking your funded activities.

At some stage, we may ask you to help us tell our RPS Members about how we are supporting you, most likely in the form of a written or filmed blog accounting your progress that we can share online. We may also ask you to play and speak at an RPS event for our Members and supporters in return for the grant we have given you.

If you have any further queries not addressed in these guidelines, you can contact our Administrator Emily Porter at emily@philharmonicsociety.uk or call us on 020 7287 0019.