FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Minnesota School of Music Composition Professor picks up top Classical Music Honor

Minneapolis, MN (5/11/2011)—The Royal Philharmonic Society has honoured University of Minnesota composition professor James Dillon by presenting him with the Large-Scale Composition Award for Nine Rivers, premiered in Glasgow last November by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Presented at the RPS Music Awards at the Dorchester Hotel in London, Tuesday, May 10, 2011, the jury highlighted the work’s “sheer ambition and the consistency of creative thought sustaining it.” The first ever staging of this marathon four-hour piece was an ambitious artistic collaboration between Glasgow Life and the BBC.

One of Scotland’s most internationally acclaimed composers and one of the world’s leading modernists, Nine Rivers is James Dillon’s most influential work. Until the premiere in Glasgow these nine pieces for orchestra, percussion group, voices and electronics had never before been presented as originally intended. The RPS jury remarked that, “this was an epic conceptual journey, two decades in the making, and an important personal voyage for its composer.”

Nine Rivers continued Dillon’s long association with the BBC SSO, and it was fitting that the world premiere of this cycle should happen in Glasgow to mark his 60th Birthday. Presented in both main spaces of Glasgow’s City Halls, it featured the combined forces of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Singers, renowned American percussionist and conductor Steven Schick, the Strasbourg Percussion Ensemble, and Australian conductor Jessica Cottis. It was broadcast in its entirety on BBC Radio 3 on Saturday, December 11, 2010.

James Dillon said: “What a marvellous experience working on the 'Nine Rivers' project with the BBC SSO, their artistry and commitment places them at the heart of contemporary performance in Britain; they are a National Treasure.”

Svend Brown, Director of Music, Glasgow Life said: “Without musicians of towering vision to inspire us we are nothing: congratulations to James Dillon – it was an immense privilege to partner the BBC in staging the world premiere of this epic piece – one which has defeated so many distinguished teams before us.”

Gavin Reid, Director of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra said: “Not only am I delighted for James, but I’m thrilled that it was the BBC and Glasgow Life who finally premiered this extraordinary musical creation and that it should be presented in the city of his birth.”

With this award, James Dillon becomes the most celebrated winner in RPS Music Awards history, having received four awards from the society. The annual Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, presented in association with BBC Radio 3, are the highest recognition for live classical music in the UK.
Established in 1902, the University of Minnesota School of Music offers a dynamic, comprehensive program to more than 500 music students in undergraduate and graduate programs, led by a world-class faculty of over 50 artists, scholars and teachers. The School of Music presents more than 400 free concerts per year. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.music.umn.edu or call (612) 626-1094 for a brochure.

Notes to editors:

2011 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for Large-Scale Composition

The jury citation reads:

The Award goes to James Dillon’s Nine Rivers for its sheer ambition and the consistency of creative thought sustaining it. With its central keystone movement finally in place, both dividing and uniting the whole, this was an epic conceptual journey, two decades in the making, and an important personal voyage for its composer.

Nine Rivers was commissioned by the BBC, IRCAM, Ars Musica, Archipel Ensemble InterContemporain, the Oslo Sinfonietta, the Holst Foundation, Greater London Arts, the City of Glasgow and Scottish Arts Council. It is published by Edition Peters.

This year’s RPS Music Awards ceremony, at London’s Dorchester Hotel, was hosted by BBC Radio 3’s Katie Derham and Andrew McGregor, with awards celebrating outstanding achievement in 2010 presented by the pianist Imogen Cooper. Awards, in thirteen categories, are decided by independent panels consisting of some of the music industry’s most distinguished practitioners. The awards honour musicians, composers, writers, broadcasters and inspirational arts organisations. The list of previous winners reads like a Who’s Who of classical music.

A special programme devoted to the RPS Music Awards will be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on Sunday, May 15, 2-4 p.m. For more information, visit www.rpsmusicawards.com or www.music.umn.edu

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