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The PIERRE FOURNIER AWARD 2009 Auditions celebrate 21 years, for the first time welcoming applicants worldwide

In 2009, the Pierre Fournier Award will be 21 years old, and for the first time the auditions will be open to applicants worldwide.

The Award was founded in 1988 by renowned cellist Ralph Kirshbaum, in honour of one of the world's greatest cellists, Pierre Fournier, who died in 1986. Since then, endowed in large part by the RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival, the Award has helped to further the careers of exceptionally talented young cellists up to the age of 28, promoting performance opportunities, making professional recordings, and where appropriate supporting further study.

The Pierre Fournier Award has developed a strong international reputation, but until now has only been open to cellists living or studying in the UK. From 2009, cellists from around the world will be able to apply.

Founder Ralph Kirshbaum says, “ *In June 2008 the Trustees decided unanimously that it was the appropriate time to extend the remit of this important award. 20 years of experience administrating the Award, a healthy financial situation underpinning the more comprehensive support we could offer the award-winner, and the opportunity to perpetuate on a broader scale the ideals and values of Pierre Fournier, all contributed to this decision.*”

Recipients of the Award are promoted in a full evening recital in the Wigmore Hall, which is professionally recorded for CD. Historically the recipient also gave a recital at the RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival until its conclusion in 2007. In 2008, the Pierre Fournier Award established affiliations with the English Chamber Orchestra and Oxford May Music Festival, and continues to develop new relationships with other organisations, to offer further valuable performance and recording opportunities.

In 2006, the Pierre Fournier Award introduced five new grants, each of £600, to promising young cellists at UK music schools: The Yehudi Menuhin School, Chethams’s School of Music, St Mary’s Edinburgh, Wells Cathedral School and the Purcell School of Music. These grants are intended to support and encourage them in their artistic development.

Past winners of the Pierre Fournier Award are: Gemma Rosefield, Richard Harwood, Alice Neary, Rebecca Gilliver, Hannah Roberts and Gregor Horsch. A number of other, now well-known cellists have received incentive grants including Marie Bitloch, Alexander Chaushian, Thomas Carroll, Louise Hopkins, Ewa Miecznikowska and Jamie Walton. The recipients are chosen by panels of distinguished cellists and musicians which through the years has included Ian Brown, Colin Carr, Levon

Chilingirian, Misha Donat, Karine Georgian, Martin Lovett, Ralph Kirshbaum, Anthony Payne, William Pleeth, David Strange, Raphael Wallfisch, Eleanor Warren and Moray Welsh.

The Award takes place every two years and the next auditions will take place in Wigmore Hall, London on 2, 3 and 5 June 2009. To apply to participate in the 2009 auditions, cellists must be no older than 28 on 1 January, 2009, and should be able to attend all three audition dates. For more details on how to apply, see www.pierrefournieraward.com or contact Jane Nicolson call or text: 07887 500977.

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