

The iconic Royal Festival Hall organ at Southbank Centre will be heard for the first time in public for nearly a decade on 18 March 2014 following its complete restoration and reinstallation by the Durham-based organ builders Harrison & Harrison, the company that built and installed the instrument in 1954.

The full £2.3million required to restore and reinstall the final two thirds of instrument, was raised thanks to the significant grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – who awarded this project £950,000 in June 2010 – and donations of £1.3 million from the public. Southbank Centre's chairman, Rick Haythornthwaite and his team of cyclists raised the final £100,000 by completing a sponsored 24-hour ride from Durham to London on Sunday 21 July 2013.

Southbank Centre's Pull Out All The Stops festival, which runs from 18 March to 26 June 2014, also marks the instrument's 60th anniversary since it first resounded in 1954. Eight new works have been commissioned by Southbank Centre to celebrate the return of the organ including works by the late John Tavener, Peter Maxwell Davies, Neil Hannon, Martin Creed, Kaija Saariaho, Simon Holt, Terry Riley and visual artist Lynette Wallworth. Celebrity recitals during the festival include performances by John Scott, Olivier Latry and Thomas Trotter – including the London premiere of Judith Weir's *The Wild Reeds* performed by Trotter on 24 April 2014. For the first time in almost a decade, visitors will be able to hear major works for the organ performed by Southbank Centre's resident orchestras such as: Poulenc's Organ Concerto; Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony; Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Alpine Symphony*; and Janá?ek's *Glagolitic Mass*.

The festival will also feature an extensive learning and participation programme to engage as many people with the instrument as possible. The festival offers a broad programme of events including films, talks, tours and workshops together with an interactive exhibition exploring the Royal Festival Hall's organ.

Southbank Centre's broad programme of learning and participation events as part of the Pull Out All The Stops Organ Festival include: introductory talks on the restoration of the organ; organ lessons for beginners; workshops on how the organ works; a talk on 1950s organ design and culture; talks from organ builders Harrison and Harrison; 'Breakfasts with...' sessions looking into selected organ works by Poulenc and Bach; a talk on the organ in the movies; a chance to build and perform your own pipe; the exploration of new music for organ and electronics; a talk on Ralph Downes – the man behind the Royal Festival Hall organ; and a collection of travelling organs from across the country take up residency outside the Royal Festival Hall.

Throughout the organ's restoration, schools in Durham and London have documented the restoration of the organ through film; photographs; articles; and interviews with the staff at organ builders Harrison and Harrison. Their work will be featured online as well as forming the main focus of the large interactive exhibition on the organ displayed at Southbank Centre throughout the festival.

Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of Southbank Centre said: "The full restoration of the Royal Festival Hall organ is a historic moment and everyone from young children to the keenest organ scholars will be able to enjoy this much-loved instrument again. We hope that the eight new works we've commissioned will introduce more people to the organ and this repertoire will have a life beyond this important landmark festival. We are delighted to work with BBC Radio 3 in this partnership and this collaboration means that audiences across the UK can be part of what we do at Southbank Centre helping us fulfil our passionate belief that art should be available to all."

Notes to editors

The Royal Festival Hall organ, designed by Ralph Downes, the instrument's first curator, forms the architectural centrepiece of Sir Leslie Martin's concert auditorium and is the largest ever built by Harrison and Harrison. Conceived in the spirit of radical thought at the heart of the 1951 Festival of Britain it was the largest music project in the country at the time, and was designed to serve Classical and Baroque repertoires alongside the full range of organ and orchestral repertoires. The instrument inspired a totally new school of organ building known as English Organ Reform. Its revolutionary open-plan design and eclectic tone had a massive impact on English organ construction and its influence was felt across the world.

Harrison and Harrison Ltd, the company that originally built and installed the Royal Festival Hall organ in 1954, is responsible for the refurbishment and reinstallation of the organ. The first phase (one third of the organ), which included the restoration and reinstallation of the Swell, Great fluework and Pedal Principal 32ft stop, was completed as part of the major transformation of the Royal Festival Hall, which reopened in June 2007. The second phase was installed during the summer of 2012 and includes the Great reeds and most of the Pedal Organ. The final phase saw the instrument completed in August 2013

Further information

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