New Concert Hall for Birmingham to Open in 2012 on University Campus

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The go-ahead has been given to build a 450-seat concert hall on the University of Birmingham's campus. This auditorium, with its associated research, teaching and rehearsal facilities, will house the Department of Music and will complete the redbrick semi-circle of buildings which have been the heart of the University since 1909.

This new facility will provide state-of-the-art accommodation for teaching and research within the department, of a kind that will match its international status. In the recent Research Assessment Exercise the department ranked second overall amongst Music departments with 85% of its published work classed as 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'.

The auditorium will be the most flexible performance space at a UK university and suitable for performances from solo voice through electroacoustic music, to a full symphony orchestra. Professor John Whenham, Head of the University's Department of Music, says, 'The auditorium will provide a wonderful space in which the University's rehearsals and concerts can take place. It will be unique in Birmingham in its size, adaptability and audience capacity and will provide facilities from which not only the university, but also local community users can benefit. It will also provide our undergraduate and postgraduate composers with the opportunity to try out their work in the acoustics of a first-rate concert hall.'

Professor David Eastwood, the University's Vice-Chancellor, says, 'Professor Edward Elgar, the University's first Professor of Music, paved the way for our long musical tradition in which music plays a major part in the fabric of the institution and its relationship with the world. Music enriches the lives of many and we recognise the importance of widening access to something that can bring such joy.

'The new building which will finally complete the original architectural vision of the University, will provide our outstanding Music Department with a much-needed permanent home that befits its international standing and benefits all participants involved in the University of Birmingham's inclusive music-making and performance.'

Other resources include the Dome rehearsal room, which is large enough to accommodate a symphony orchestra, and new electroacoustic music studios in which the Music Department's international community of undergraduates and postgraduates can work in cutting-edge facilities. A new suite of early music rooms for the Centre for Early Music Performance and Research will provide properly temperature and humidity controlled homes for the Department's large and growing working collection of original and reproduction instruments, ranging in period from the middle ages to the 19th century, and laboratory space for staff and students to experiment in the performance practices of earlier centuries. The new auditorium itself will also feature technologically advanced facilities enabling students and researchers to perform there with BEAST - the Music Department's internationally renowned 100-channel sound diffusion system.

Sir Simon Rattle, Principal Conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and formerly of the CBSO, commented: 'I'm excited by the plans for the University of Birmingham's new music building, both as a centre of excellence which will attract and nurture talented musicians, but also as a venue which opens University music-making to the wider local and regional community for all to enjoy.'

Helen Newman, Associate Director of Glenn Howells Architects, who have designed the new auditorium building says: 'Developing an understanding of the underlying geometry, rigor and architecture of the existing buildings has been a fascinating process. We are delighted the music department and functions of the auditorium will now enrich the original vision of Chancellor's Court as the heart of the University.'

Thanks to the generosity of the University's alumni, friends and supporters £3.6 million has been raised towards the £5m fundraising goal needed to complete this exciting project; a public fundraising campaign including an opportunity to name a seat in the auditorium will be launched in the Autumn. Those wishing to support the project can call Philip Addy at the University's Development and Alumni Office on 0121 414 8641 or email: p.w.j.addy@bham.ac.uk

Ends

Notes to Editors

Glenn Howells Architects was established in 1990 and has built up a strong reputation over the last 18 years as one of the foremost design led architectural practices in the UK. With offices in Birmingham and London, the work of the practice is based on clarity of vision and innovative use of materials. Glenn Howells Architects has won numerous national and international design competitions and received over 50 awards for projects ranging from cultural buildings and housing to large-scale urban mixed-use developments. The practice is currently working on schemes throughout the UK, Europe, Dubai and India. **www.glennhowells.co.uk (http://www.glennhowells.co.uk/)**

University of Birmingham

1. The University of Birmingham has around 27,000 students and 6,000 members of staff and a turnover of £419 million. Birmingham encompasses not only the lakeside setting and green landscape of its Edgbaston campus, but also has bases across Birmingham as well at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford upon Avon, the Ironbridge Institute at the Ironbridge Gorge and at its outward bound Priestley Centre on the edge of Lake Coniston in the Lake District.

2. A Singalong event will be held at the University of Birmingham's Great Hall, Aston Webb building, on Sunday 1st November with CBSO Chorus Director Simon Halsey and Thomas Trotter, City of Birmingham organist. The programme will be Handel, Zadok the Priest, Elgar, Great is the Lord and Parry, I was glad. All those wishing to take part can call 0121 414 3280 or visit www.music.bham.ac.uk for further information and to book a place. Proceeds from this event will go towards the fundraising campaign to support the project.

3. Donors to the auditorium project include:

- Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- John (University of Birmingham, Economics 1980) & Moyra Horseman
- Dr Doug Ellis CBE (DUniv 2008)

For further information

Kate chapple, University of Birmingham press office, tel. 0121 414 2772 or 07789 921164, email: k.h.chapple@bham.ac.uk

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