

The Royal Society of Edinburgh

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National Cultural Flagships' Maiden Voyage

Edinburgh International Festival Director, Jonathan Mills and Roy McEwan, Managing Director, Scottish Chamber Orchestra are among experts set to explore what it takes to be a 'National' cultural flagship, when a new series of seminars launches this Thursday 21 February at The Royal Society of Edinburgh* (RSE). How, in the context of new nations and nationalisms, government and policies, do institutions represent different art forms and respond to the challenge of being "National", while still incorporating historic variations? Leaders from a wide range of cultural bodies will have an opportunity to share their experiences and reflect on how they seek to be 'National'.

Encompassing a range of values and purposes (eg. excellence, geographical spread, international ambitions), such companies are also drivers in the preservation and development of the art form. Future seminars will discuss national theatre and dance companies, film and broadcasting, and museums and galleries. Opening with a discussion on *Music & Opera*, Thursday's influential panel will debate the issues for music organisations operating under a 'National' remit.

RSE Vice-President (Arts and Humanities), Professor Jan McDonald said:

I welcome this initiative as an important contribution by Scotland's National Academy to the cultural debates which have flourished in Scotland, particularly since Devolution. Discussions on national cultural identity, and in particular, collaboration between the Society and Scottish cultural institutions form an important part of the RSE's expanding programme in the Arts and Humanities.

*Event full with waiting list in operation.

Chairman: Professor Simon Frith, Tovey Chair of Music, The University of Edinburgh

Speakers: Jonathan Mills, Festival Director & Chief Executive, Edinburgh International Festival

Roy McEwan, Managing Director, Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Joining the discussion panel: Alex Reedijk, Director, Scottish Opera

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Notes for Editors

Biography:

Prof. Simon Frith

I took up the Tovey Chair of Music on January 1 2006 having had quite an unusual academic career. My undergraduate degree (from Oxford) was in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. My Masters and PhD (from the University of California, Berkeley) were in Sociology. (My thesis topic was Education and the Working Class in Leeds, 1780-1870.) I initially taught in the Sociology Department at the University of Warwick, before moving to Strathclyde University to become Director of the John Logie Baird Centre for Research in Film and Television and Professor of English Studies. In 1999 I moved to the University of Stirling and a chair in Film and Media.

For much of my career, as both an academic and journalist, I have been engaged with the problems of taking popular music seriously. As an academic I was a founder member of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music and a founding editor of the journal, *Popular Music*, and the majority of my scholarly publications have been in this field, most recently *Music and Copyright*, edited with Lee Marshall for Edinburgh University Press in 2004. As a journalist I started out as an editor of the pioneering British rock magazine, *Let It Rock*, and became rock critic for both *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*. I was a music columnist for the *New York Village Voice* from 1980-1995, and have chaired the judges of the Mercury Music prize since it began in 1992.

Roy McEwan

Roy McEwan was born in Dumfries and studied at the London School of Economics. He was House Manager at the St George's Theatre in London and Manager of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1978. In 1979, he was appointed Administrator of the MacRobert Arts Centre at the University of Stirling and, from 1982 to 1991, was the Centre's Director. He became Director of Arts Development for North West Arts Board, Manchester in 1991 and, in 1993, was appointed Managing Director of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Chairman of the Federation of Scottish Theatres from 1988 to 1991, he also served on the Scottish Arts Council Drama Committee in 1991 and from 1993-99 on the Combined Arts Committee. From 2003 to 2007 he was a Council member of the Scottish Arts Council.

From 1993 to 1998 he was also a member of the Board of the Scottish Music Information Centre, a member of the Board of the Association of British Orchestras from 1993 to 2003 and Chairman of the ABO's Scottish forum until 2007. Since 2004 he has been Chairman of Glasgow Grows Audiences.

A fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, he is a member of Convocation at Heriot Watt University and has also been a member of the validation panel for the BMus (Hons) course at Napier University.

Jonathan Mills

Jonathan Mills took up the post of Festival Director and Chief Executive of the Edinburgh International Festival in October 2006. The Edinburgh International Festival annually presents a rich programme of classical music, theatre, opera and dance over a three-week period in late summer.

Prior to this, he was the Vice-Chancellor's (Professorial) Fellow at the University of Melbourne, Director of the Alfred Deakin Lectures and an Artistic Advisor to the new Melbourne Recital Centre & Elisabeth Murdoch Hall, which is scheduled to open in 2009.

One of Australia's most experienced festival directors his previous posts have included Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Arts Festival, the Melbourne Federation Festival, the Melbourne Millennium Eve celebrations and the Brisbane Biennial International Music Festival.

As a composer he is regularly commissioned in Australia and increasingly in Europe and the UK. His opera *The Eternity Man* has been filmed by British Director Julian Temple for Channel 4 and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation; it is due for release in 2008. His composition *Sandakan Threnody* for solo tenor, choir and orchestra won the Prix Italia in 2005. He was also awarded the Genesis Prize Commission for Opera (2003); Centenary Medal, Australia (2002) and Global Leader for Tomorrow, World Economic Forum, Davos (2000).

Jonathan Mills was born in Sydney, Australia in 1963. He graduated in music from the University of Sydney where he specialised in composition with Peter Sculthorpe. In addition to his work as a composer, he also holds a Masters in Architecture specialising in Acoustic Design.

Mr Alex Reedijk

Alex Reedijk, born in New Zealand, spent many years working for a wide variety of Arts Festivals and Projects throughout the world. In his time with the New Zealand Festival, based in Wellington, he helped present the Edinburgh Military Tattoo on their first and extremely successful visit outside of Edinburgh. He recalls both measuring Edinburgh Castle and the hospitality of the officers mess with great fondness!

Alex then became General Director of the NBR New Zealand Opera from 2002 until January 2006 when he joined Scottish Opera - at a time when it was slowly beginning to reclaim its rightful place as a prominent Scottish Arts organisation.

About the RSE

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) is an educational charity, registered in Scotland. Independent and non-party-political, our wide-ranging educational activities include:

- Organising lectures, debates and conferences
- Conducting major independent inquiries
- Providing educational activities for school students throughout Scotland
- Distributing over £1.7 million to top researchers and entrepreneurs
- Showcasing to the World the best of our research and development
- Increasing two-way international exchange
- Encouraging, promoting and rewarding excellence
- Offering state-of-the-art conference facilities
- Publishing internationally respected learned journals

The RSE was founded in 1783 by Royal Charter for the "Advancement of Learning and Useful Knowledge". It is regarded as Scotland's National Academy of Science and Letters. Today it has around 1400 Fellows whose expertise encompasses the full spectrum of the sciences, medicine, engineering and technology, education, law, the arts, humanities, social sciences, business, industry, the professions and public service. This multi-disciplinary perspective makes the RSE unique amongst the United Kingdom's learned societies. It is funded by a range of carefully selected charitable, public and private bodies. Its mission today is providing public benefit through the advancement of learning and useful knowledge.