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'March sees the celebration of Commonwealth Day, marked by a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey with HM The King and the Royal Family in attendance'

Spring is always a delightful time here at the Clubhouse with our garden and adjacent Green Park beginning to stir into life. March also sees the celebration of Commonwealth Day, marked by a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey with HM The King and the Royal Family in attendance. ROSL will be well represented as an important accredited CW organisation and is a timely reminder to all of us of our enduring commitment to international friendship. Prior to the service I will be laying a wreath on behalf of ROSL at the Memorial Gates ceremony to honour the millions of service men and women from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean who volunteered to serve with the British Armed Forces during the two world wars. This ceremony also celebrates the contribution that they and their descendants continue to make to the rich diversity of British society.

Our Annual Music Competition section finals are well under way, with a cornucopia of young musical talent taking to the stage in the Princess Alexandra Hall. Do diarise the Gold Medal final taking place on 18 July at the Wigmore Hall! And look out for our wine dinners, Public Affairs talks and other events. I am especially delighted that later this year sees the return of renowned Maltese operatic tenor Joseph Calleja for a special performance which will be a real treat for members. Further into the season, our garden will be opening at the end of April/beginning of May weather permitting, with a new and fresh seasonal menu prepared by our Executive Chef.

Elsewhere in this edition of *Overseas*, we'll be taking a look behind the silver screen and paying tribute to the producers, composers and others in the film world that make the magic happen. We have two very special pieces from one of the world's leading documentary film-makers and pioneer in immersive storytelling Anthony Geffen, and celebrated cinematic composer Stephen Endelman who has a wonderful historic connection to ROSL.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

Dr Annette Prandzioch
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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The AMC means we can be there to offer (young musicians) guidance, mentorship and connections in the industry

From the EDITOR

What goes into making an onscreen masterpiece? Whilst charismatic stars take both the spotlight and headlines, the true identity of a film is conjured by the collaborative teamwork of creatives making magic away from the glare of flashlights. In this edition we invite you to push back the curtain to discover more about the 'hidden' masters of the entertainment industry, as we explore the creativity that takes place behind the scenes; from a fascinating interview with producer and leading documentary film-maker Anthony Geffen; to a deeply personal piece from Hollywood score composer Stephen Edelman, who has a surprising ROSL connection; and a look at the role of textile artists with designer and the BBC's *Great British Sewing Bee 2021* finalist Raphael Dilhan. We'll also take a closer look at the months of hard work that pave the road to the Annual Music Competition Gold Medal Final with Artistic Director Geoff Parkin and Arts Manager Cerys Beesley, as they reveal what makes a young musician a candidate for the coveted prize, as well as the preparation needed to ensure a seamless season of AMC.

As spring emerges tentatively in the northern hemisphere, our Food and Beverage team are gearing up for another season of sensational flavours and creations for our members to enjoy. A highlight will be our collaboration with Michel Escoffier, great-grandson of the legendary French chef Auguste Escoffier and head of the Escoffier Foundation; expect a delicious celebration of classic French gastronomy. Elsewhere, our pastry chefs are busy creating our seasonal afternoon tea – find out more about the history of this delicious institution on page 24, where I delve into the storied origins of this ritual.

Wishing all of our members across the world a wonderful new season, whether you'll be enjoying the fresh energy of spring or the mellow beauty of autumn's return.

Rosie Allen

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Venturing into the depths of the Great Barrier Reef with Sir David Attenborough

FILMS OF THE FUTURE

Producer and documentary film-maker Anthony Geffen is helping to pioneer the future of digital storytelling, harnessing the power of AI and extended reality (XR) to create evermore immersive experiences. Editor Rosie Allen speaks to him about the potential for these bold and industry-changing technologies, and how humanity and ethics can remain at the heart of documentary-making in the constantly changing media world

Atlantic productions is at the forefront of XR and AI technologies. Where do you see these technologies taking immersive storytelling next? Do you think it has the power to bring people back into film theatres, or could you see people really embracing the potential of these technologies in their homes?

The new high-end XR headsets like the Apple Vision Pro and the new Google Samsung headset offer extraordinary 16K resolution (which is four times that of your television screen) and superb stereoscopic sound. The integration of AI and interactive storytelling will further transform these platforms. While these technological advancements provide an extraordinary individual experience, cinemas will still have an important role to play. To remain relevant, they will need to evolve and integrate the latest technologies. However, there will always be a unique value in the communal atmosphere and shared experience that cinemas

offer, which cannot be replicated in the same way through personal devices yet.

You're one of the world's leading documentary film-makers, and the appetite for documentary film-making only seems to have got stronger with the popularity of online streaming services and the resurgence of true crime documentaries etc. Have the ethics of documentary-making changed in recent years to keep up with this appetite? And has it changed the way that you and your production company approach documentary creation?

Audiences around the world still respond to high-quality, carefully researched and balanced storytelling even in a world dominated by fast turnaround sensationalist content. However, the future of storytelling, regardless of its format faces challenges. Particularly with the growing potential for AI to manipulate narratives in ways we haven't fully



anticipated yet. In this context, ethics will play a critical role, as storytellers must remain committed to truthfulness and integrity, ensuring that the stories they tell are grounded in reality and not distorted by the ease with which information and images can be fabricated or manipulated.

There's some anxiety in media industries about the use of AI and its potential to make creatives somewhat redundant. How valid do you think these fears are? Or is there an opportunity for AI to make human storytelling even more valuable when used alongside?

AI has the potential to elevate storytelling and streamline research, but it also comes with the risk of subtly influencing audiences in ways we may not fully realise. As AI becomes more integrated into media production, it's essential to be transparent about its role so audiences can clearly tell where the line between human creativity and AI-driven content lies. While AI can certainly boost creativity, it's the human touch, authenticity, ethical judgment and emotional depth that gives stories their heart. It'll be fascinating to watch how storytellers will use AI to push boundaries to amplify creativity.

ANTHONY GEFFEN

Anthony is one of the world's leading documentary film-makers and a pioneer in immersive storytelling.

.....
He's won over 50 international awards including 5 British Academy Awards (BAFTAs) and 11 American Emmys. *WIRED* described him as a visionary storyteller.

.....
Known for his collaborative work with legendary figures such as Sir David Attenborough, and Stephen Hawking, Anthony has pioneered the use of virtual reality film making which he describes as a medium 'where you can immerse people in a 360-degree environment'

You've had a varied and incredible career. What is it about visual storytelling that has kept you interested for so long and what has been a career highlight for you?

Visual storytelling has shaped humanity for millennia, from cave paintings to today's digital platforms that connect billions worldwide. As technology evolves, it brings both exciting opportunities and challenges, requiring storytellers to constantly innovate and adapt to stay ahead of the technological curve to engage audiences while preserving the essence of the story.

After 30 years in film-making, it's difficult to pinpoint singular highlights given the diversity of subjects explored. However, one of the most meaningful was the BBC series *The Promised Land*, which chronicled the

migration of five million African Americans from the rural South to the urban North, a transformative moment in American history.

Two standout moments with David Attenborough include the BBC series *First Life*, where we used cutting-edge technology to bring key moments in the history of life on Earth to life in a new way, and a groundbreaking project for Sky, using 3D technology and CGI to resurrect ancient creatures in a film exploring the Natural History Museum at night.

I also had the privilege of working with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for over a year on a film for the BBC about her coronation. One of my most powerful memories was entering KV63 in the Valley of the Kings, the first tomb discovered since Tutankhamun.

More recently, I have been pioneering immersive technology for the Apple Vision Pro, documenting extreme adventures that recently took me to a breathtaking location in Iceland where we filmed a free diver breaking a world record under the ice.

Each of these experiences represents a step forward in the ever-evolving landscape of storytelling, and I look forward to pushing the boundaries even further in the years to come.

You've worked with David Attenborough and Stephen Hawking, both of course well-known for their incredible curiosity about the world around them. How does it feel to collaborate with minds such as those and how does that creative process work?

I've been fortunate to have collaborated with both David Attenborough and Stephen Hawking over a number of years. Both of these experiences were extraordinary, offering profound insights into both the natural world and the mysteries of the universe. They not only shaped the way I perceive the world but also deeply influence my creative process, encouraging storytelling

It's the human touch, authenticity, ethical judgment and emotional depth that gives stories their heart

driven by curiosity for the world and heightening a sense of responsibility, knowing the power that storytelling has to shape the world around us.

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to work with, and collaborate with, a number of people whom I also consider mentors, each of whom has influenced my worldview and creative approach. Frank Wells, former head of Warner Brothers and Walt Disney, who was also a mountaineer and guided me in the early stages of my career; and Arthur C. Clarke, who taught me about the future. Later, Steve Jobs and George Lucas opened

my eyes to the potential of using new technology in storytelling. More recently, Mo Gawdat, the former chief business officer at Google, has provided profound insights into the future of AI.

The Wildest Dream took you to Everest to depict George Mallory's 1924 climb. Are there any other extreme environments that you'd love to bring to life on screen?

I've been fortunate enough to lead filming expeditions to the summit of Mount Everest and to the deepest point of the ocean, the Mariana Trench. There are many extreme places I'm eager to film, including the Empress penguins in Antarctica and the !Kung Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert.

With the rise of immersive storytelling technology, the potential for capturing experiences and places has never been more exciting. Immersive storytelling in XR and VR can take people to places they've never been before and even transport them back in time, allowing us to explore the world and its wonders in ways that were once unimaginable.

CAPTIVATING CAREERS

If Anthony's incredible career has inspired you, then keep an eye on our events calendar for a new season of fascinating speakers and guests at ROSL throughout the year at rosl.org.uk/events

HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS CHANGING FILM

SMOOTH OPERATORS
AI is being used to remove some of the more laborious tasks of film production, including analysing scripts, planning production schedules and forecasting a film's likely box office performance.

ETHICS
While sourcing archive imagery for a documentary, Archival Producer Rachel Antell was disturbed to be provided with AI-created 'historical' images that looked incredibly convincing. She went on to form the Archival Producers Alliance, which have since released updated guidance

on the ethical considerations of using AI in documentary film-making, to avoid 'muddying the historical record'. There are also concerns that Deepfakes, which use machines to create ultra convincing avatars, or alter voices could be used in an unethical way.

WIPING THE YEARS AWAY
Martin Scorsese's 2019 film *The Irishman* used AI to 'de-age' some of its stars, using special software to take decades off of actors Al Pacino, Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci, in order that Scorsese could convincingly reunite this iconic trio of actors once again.

Fitting the high notes

STEPHEN EDELMAN'S JOURNEY TO HOLLYWOOD

Film score composer Stephen Edelman reflects on an impressive career creating music for Hollywood productions, explaining his creative process and the highlights of his working life so far

I've been scoring films since 1993; my background was and is as a classical musician. Firstly, as a clarinetist at the Purcell School for Young Musicians and then as a composer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. I met Dr Annette Prandzioch the Director-General of the Royal Overseas League this past summer at a mutual friend's birthday party. It was a fortuitous meeting, and it sparked wonderful memories. Firstly, of the 14 year old boy performing the Brahms *Clarinet Sonata* at a ROSL concert hall and then in 1986 I received an award that allowed my experimental quartet to visit Belgrade and



perform both at their student centre and live on their national radio station.

I'm often asked how I got into writing music for film and what are some of the highlights of my career thus far, so, in 1,000 words I'm going to try to give an answer. I've always loved film.

From an early age I remember watching the Saturday afternoon musicals with my grandmother, to the cartoons and main feature at the local Odeon. However, it all started for me when I moved to New York in 1992. I relocated with the ambition of becoming a film composer, but to be honest I didn't have clue how to go about that. I had never thought about it, and no one had ever given me any advice. Like most things in life,

one needs a break that usually happens because you have a supporter or a chance meeting. I'd met a music editor – that's a person who places your music into the film exactly where you'd intended it to be, before the director or producer change their minds – not uncommon!

Editor Susanna Peric and I became friends and she introduced me to a music supervisor, whose job is to place songs in films and TV shows. I'm sure you've wondered how the music is chosen in a scene to accompany a car driving with the radio on, or at a dinner party; well, that's their job. I was lucky because I was already employed by the Metropolitan Opera as a composer in residence which mainly meant doing outreach work in the community, writing original operas with young people, which is something I'd done in the UK for Opera 80 and ENO.

Cinematographer Jeffrey Kimball had been hired to supervise a quintessential New

York Italianate film, *Household Saints*, written and directed by the brilliant Nancy Savoca, and they needed a composer for the dramatic underscore. I read the script, went to a screening of the film and was invited to an interview, for which I drove to Nyack, just north of Manhattan. It was a little bit like going to the doctor, waiting in an annex with other composers who were being interviewed for the same job. Stewart Copeland the drummer from the Police was just before me. In fact, I was the last and youngest composer to be seen. I entered the office with Jeffery, Nancy and her Picture Editor Elizabeth Kling.

Opposite me was Jonathan Demme's academy award for *The Silence of the Lambs*. I was so scared my knees were making the table move. Jonathan Demme was the executive producer of the film, and a legend. After the polite introductions Nancy jumped right in asked me what I'd do with the score. ▶

I read the script, went to a screening of the film and was invited to an interview, for which I drove to Nyack, just north of Manhattan

ICONIC SCORES

For many iconic films, their scores are a huge part of their enduring appeal, such as these classics:



Star Wars

John William's foreboding *Imperial March* score takes inspiration from Holst's *Mars, Bringer of War*; both invoke a sense of majestic menace



Silence of the Lambs

Composer Howard Shore scored the film to the edit, inspired by Jodie Foster's 'fascinating' performance as Clarice Starling



Superman

The triumphant John Williams 1978 theme has been used in all *Superman* movies bar one, including an upcoming 2025 release



Supporting young musicians

Stephen Edelman performed at ROSL as a young clarinetist, winning a scholarship to perform abroad that would nurture his passion for music and performance. We're passionate about our pledge to support young musicians around the world as they go on to successful careers, some of whom – as Stephen's impressive resumé proves – will go on to international success. If you'd like to find out more about supporting our work with young musicians and artists, please visit rosl.org.uk/supporting-rosl-arts/

I took a deep breath – I'd done my research. One of the temporary cues that had been edited into the film by Elizabeth was from a little-known Puccini opera *La Rondine*, first performed at The Metropolitan Opera in 1928. However, Elizabeth has only used the introduction to *Chi il Bel Sogno Doretta*, the main aria. I said, without missing a beat, 'why don't we use that music idea as the starting point for my score?'. Two weeks later the producer called me and offered me that job.

It was my first feature film for a studio Newline and I was up and running. Three weeks later I went back to Nyack to play Nancy the themes and talk through the score, and six weeks later I was in front of New York's finest musicians conducting the orchestra at the historic RCA studios.

It's funny how one thing leads to the next. After that I scored films such as *A Bronx Tale*, directed by and starring Robert De Niro, along with *Imaginary Crimes* and *Camilla*, all leading to a ten-picture deal at Miramax.

The first of my films with Miramax and perhaps one of my favourite scores was a film starring Hugh Grant called *The Englishman who went up a Hill but came down a Mountain*. I came back to London to meet Director Christopher Monger and spot the film – spotting a film is when you sit with the director and his team and decide where music will go, and discuss the emotional beats you wish to capture with the score. It offered me the opportunity to write authentically. I wanted to create an Elgarian

heroic theme with heart for Johnny; a quirky theme to accompany the villages; a love theme for Hugh and Tara Fitzgerald; and some Celtic-inspired music for the task of turning a hill into a mountain. I had a great time writing the score and then recording it at the legendary Abbey Road Studios.

The score proved to be a hit with audiences, and it became my first record released by the legendary music executive Glen Brunman on Sony's Epic label. Sometimes things just gel between creatives, and this was one of those

times. To this day *Johnny's Theme* is used by NBC in their Olympic Games coverage; it was first used in 1996 when Muhammad Ali lit the torch. The score mirrored the emotional development of the characters in the film, finding the strength to prevail while at the same showing humour respect and love.

I've scored 90 films and many episodes of TV, of which my favourite is the PBS documentary series *The American Dream* for Anthony Geffen's Atlantic Productions and two space shows at the Hayden Planetarium. I write something every day whether I'm assigned or not.

In 2019 I wrote, produced and scored a short film *A Boy a Man and a Kite* which went on to win many awards. I really enjoyed the process so I decided to produce more, and I now have a slate of films; the first one, *Murdering Michael Malloy* will be shooting soon. I've also written a musical with Matt Goss formally of the band Bros, *Eaton Place*, to open at the Colosseum March 2026.

I scored films such as *A Bronx Tale*, directed by and starring Robert De Niro, along with *Imaginary Crimes* and *Camilla* all leading to a ten-picture deal at Miramax

LET THE LEAGUE BE YOUR LEGACY

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Making THE MAGIC

Behind the scenes of every blockbuster series or arthouse cinematic gem is a costume department; the team that creates the visual identity of a film, though a process of designing, dyeing, sewing and even destroying the fabrics that contribute so much to a character's development, or showstopping scenes. Editor Rosie Allen talks to Textile Artist Raphael Dilhan about the art of dressing for screen

The costume department's job is to work with the creative team to help interpret and create the visual language of a film through the design of clothing. Part of that team is the textile artist, which is my role. It's a job that comprises many elements: designing costumes that will reflect the director's vision for the production; the creation of the clothes themselves which includes anything from dyeing, printing and sewing to the 'breakdown' of the costume (the process of ageing) as the story and the character evolves, for example in battles scenes, or to show the passage of time.

As an artist I get involved pretty early in the project as part of a team that will oversee the design, production and breakdown of the costumes. A director and designer will have been hired by the production company, with the designer having presented a portfolio of concepts in order to be hired. So for smaller productions the concepts will have been signed off early on so that the team can collaborate on producing them.



For huge scale productions, such as a Marvel film for instance, the concepts will have been designed months in advance – as you can imagine, superhero costumes are a huge part of that character creation and the story itself, so its vital that visual identity is nailed down way before production begins. And so I might be presented with these designs and asked 'is this possible?'. Then as a team you work together to see how that dream can be realised.

It's often not just textiles you'll be working with; you might need to be moulding shapes to create armour, or working out how to incorporate leather into a costume – so many textures and materials with different properties that need to be understood and worked with to come up with the final vision. That's why collaboration with other departments is vital.

Once a costume is made we will then 'age' them to various degrees depending on the storyline and setting

Dyeing and printing needs even more forethought. They're a series of processes that need to be finished prior to making the costume, so we'll be sampling lots of dye colours, looking at plain, tie dye or gradients to work out what's best for the particular costume, and then we have a discussion about the types of materials and fibres that will work best with our chosen dyes or printing technique.

Costume breakdown is an art in and of itself. If you have a show where there are going to be major battle scenes you could be making dozens of the same costume so we have enough for the whole duration and so you can really show the evolution of the costume throughout that battle scene. Once a costume is made we will then 'age' it to various degrees depending on the storyline and setting. So for a show set in the Medieval period for example, we'd be looking more at battle scenes so we can go a little more dramatic with the process. But for a more contemporary show it might be some light washing to leech the colour a little.

There's no one route into the textile artistry world; everyone has a varied background. I studied product and interior design, but somewhere along the way I got involved in painting props for a film; while on set I met people in costume who were like 'ah you can paint!' so I started helping, adding mud and blood to soldiers on the film *Fury*. I then went on to develop a range of skills from painting to dyeing. I have my own design sensibilities and opinions on colours and contrasts in costume, but it's not realistic to expect to bring your own aesthetic to every job; there's usually some leeway to make a suggestion, but much of the time we're following the vision of the director, especially when you're working with someone with a very strong cinematic world such as Tim Burton.

For a director with an incredibly strong sense of aesthetic, there's usually a whole creative department specifically chosen for those films; they might surround themselves with people they've worked with before and who they trust to interpret that visual identity. A lot of production companies, once they've found a team they like, they'll stick together.

I've had a really busy and interesting few years, working on projects such as *Deadpool vs Wolverine*, followed up by series two of *Wednesday* and I'm now starting on *House of the Dragon*. All three are very different, so it takes time to adjust, but I love that in this industry that there's so much variety, and that I can be working on something very futuristic after a project that's set far in the past.

ARTIST PROFILE

Making The Magic

Hailing from Cholet (an historic French town known for its weaving, London-based Raphael Dilhan is a designer, costume-maker and textile artist with an impressive career working on many smash hit television series and films. His creative process involves using unusual materials and embellishments to create a unique aesthetic, and incorporates dyeing, printing, embroidery and other skills to elevate more traditional materials. Raphael was a finalist in the 2021 series of the BBC's *Great British Sewing Bee*.



MASKS WITH OMBRÉ EFFECT RED TO BLACK

Textile design often requires working with specialist materials, such as leather or moulded plastics, to create the desired look



WITCH'S CAPE AGED TO LOOK LIKE BARK AND EARTH

Fantasy and historical TV series and films lend themselves to a much more dramatic and saturated level of 'breakdown', creating incredible textures



CAPE DYED, PATCH DYED AND AGED

Dyeing processes, such as the patch dyeing technique seen here, need to be undertaken before the costume creation begins

AMC GOLD MEDAL 2025

As our prestigious Annual Music Competition Gold Medal Awards enters its 73rd year, Artistic Director Geoff Parkin and Arts Manager Cerys Beesley reveal what makes the competition unique in the industry and the process behind making it happen

This is the 73rd year of the AMC – what do you think has made it so enduring and why does it still stand apart from other music competitions?

Geoff Parkin (GP): For me, the principal reason the competition has endured is the sheer quality of winners we have had over the years, and the enduring relationships we have fostered with them, ensuring that our reputation is carried far and wide. There are very few international music competitions that have their own building and concert hall, and so our ability to offer a musical 'home' to our alumni is crucial in ensuring that we can connect with them throughout their careers. It also means we can be there when needed to offer guidance, mentorship and connections in the industry.

Our alumni are our ambassadors, and in the past 20 years over 500 young musicians have become ROSL alumni, demonstrating the astonishing reach of our competition.

What does the 'road' to the Gold Medal Final look like in terms of programming and booking?

Cerys Beesley (CB): The journey to the Gold Medal is both exciting and rewarding. Now that the Gold Medal Final is hosted at Wigmore Hall, it has garnered even greater attention, with many musicians eager for the chance to perform in such a prestigious venue.

The process begins when musicians apply through an online form, submitting up to 15 minutes of filmed music. Geoff and a guest

panellist then listen to each submission, selecting around 14 musicians in each category to advance to the live semi-finals. Once the selections are made, I have the privilege of scheduling the semi-final days, which are closed, all-day sessions held every Monday before the public section final on Tuesday evenings. During these semi-final days, the Arts team can be seen escorting musicians around the building and ensuring minimal noise outside the concert hall, while the panel listens to a full day of 20-minute recitals. At the end of the day, the panel typically selects four finalists to perform in the section final concert the following evening. All candidates are informed of the results that night, and the finalists begin preparing new repertoire for their final performance, often with entirely different pieces from those presented during the semi-final.

The afternoon before the final is dedicated to a rehearsal in the hall, which will be only the second time the musicians have performed there before taking the stage to an attentive audience and the discerning panel. When the evening arrives, the musicians perform their recitals, one by one. After the performances, the panel retreats to deliberate while the audience awaits the announcement of the evening's winner.

Once the section finals are over, the solo winners have a couple of months to fine-tune their 15-minute programmes for the Gold Medal Final. This is an art in itself: crafting a performance that communicates their identity within such a brief timeframe. ●



Marmen Quartet 2018 AMC Finals

When the Gold Medal day arrives there is a palpable sense of nerves, as many of the performers have never appeared on such a grand stage.

The competition always brings a lively energy to the building, from managing the box office and welcoming audiences to ensuring musicians are on stage at the right time. The competition season certainly keeps us on our toes!

When selecting musicians to progress to the section finals, what qualities are you looking for particularly?

GP: It is a given that we are looking for high level of technique and musicianship and in the main, the musicians who stand out tend to have a strong idea of who they are as a performer, and a clear vision of what they want to put across. Programming is key; how they select their repertoire and how their programme in each round shows off their qualities.

Judging music is a very objective thing in many ways, and the juries often have very robust discussions when deciding who to take through to the next rounds. I think that's a mark of the seriousness with which we take the responsibility of supporting these young talents, as well as highlighting the challenge of comparing performances that affect people in different ways. Each musician will have their own unique personality and character – ultimately it is about how they harness this for the enjoyment of the audience.



2024 Winner Dafydd Jones accepting his award



2022 winner Jack Hancher



Dr Annette Prandzioch at Wigmore Hall

Are there any particularly notable examples of past winners that have gone on to even bigger and better success?

CB: Each year, the list of names in our Gold Medal programme is truly impressive. The most renowned, of course, is Jacqueline du Pré, who won in 1961 at the remarkable age of sixteen. The list continues to grow, with many former winners remaining close to ROSL, returning to perform, adjudicate competitions, and, in many cases, teach and inspire the next generation of talent.

Though I may be biased, one of the most rewarding aspects of our Arts programme is that many of our musicians become familiar faces at ROSL over the years. They not only appreciate the guidance and mentorship we offer but also cherish the concert opportunities, even long after their prize money has been spent. These musicians become wonderful ambassadors for our organisation and it is a privilege to watch them achieve even greater success.

Among the rising stars in recent years, be sure to keep an eye on Sean Shibe, Michael Foyle, Ryan Corbett, Emily Sun, the Marmen Quartet, Abel Selacoe, Huw Wiggin and Lotte Betts-Dean. But this is

just the beginning – there have been countless talented musicians who have graced our Princess Alexandra Hall stage.

Why would you encourage interested musicians to apply for the AMC?

GP: Competitions can be an intimidating experience for many young musicians, and it can feel like taking a leap a faith to have a go sometimes! Preparing an application for a competition is however a worthwhile activity in itself. It encourages a musician to focus on each aspect of their musicianship, from programming to technique, stage presentation to interpretation.

If applicants progress to the live rounds, they can expect a warm welcome and a friendly competition. I have always wanted to take the 'scary' factor out of our competition, to ensure performers genuinely feel it was a worthwhile experience.

Our Section Finals will take place every Tuesday until 18 March. The AMC Gold Medal Final 2025 will take place on Friday 18 July at Wigmore Hall. Visit rosl.org.uk/events for more details and to buy tickets



Jacqueline Du Pré receiving a prize in 1961 with Sir Lennox Berkeley

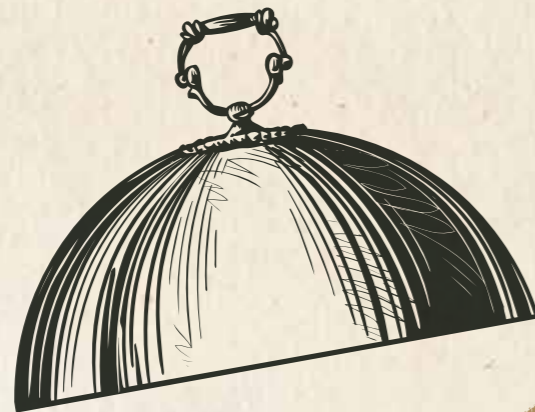
73RD ROSL ANNUAL MUSIC COMPETITION EST 1952



AMC FINALS 2025

Now in our 73rd year, our renowned competition boasts £75,000 in awards and has provided a springboard into the industry for scores of musicians. Join us to see who will join the illustrious ranks of our ROSL Annual Music Prizewinners and support the brilliant young musicians who take to the Princess Alexandra Hall stage.

Visit rosl.org.uk/events for more details



Tastemaker

AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER

THE MAN WHO CHANGED HOW WE EAT

To celebrate the launch of our collaborative event with Michel Escoffier, Editor Rosie Allen delves into the history of his great-grandfather Auguste Escoffier, the man who established a legacy of excellence and changed kitchen culture for good

Imagine you're at a smart fine dining restaurant; the ambience is beautifully crafted, the service friendly and attentive, the food delicious and wonderfully presented. Now suppose you're invited to take a tour of the kitchen; but in stark contrast to the sleek and ordered front of house, you're confronted with complete chaos. Unsanitary work areas, an overflowing sink of dishes, swearing, shouting, drunkenness and brawling among the staff... It's fair to say you probably wouldn't leave a five-star Tripadvisor review, or add it to your Instagram stories. But the scrupulous sanitation, discipline and starched chef's whites that have become familiar to us via TV depictions of professional kitchens, from Disney's smash hit *The Bear*, to *MasterChef* and even Pixar's *Ratatouille*, are a relatively recent introduction to the restaurant world. Behind the glitz and glamour, the 1800s restaurant scene was not only wildly disordered, but held none of the prestige and respect that top chefs and renowned kitchens command today; in fact the concept of haute cuisine was non-existent. This would all change with the determination of one man: Auguste Escoffier.

The Escoffier way

Born in the village of Villeneuve-Loubet in South-East France, 1846, Escoffier entered the restaurant trade at the encouragement of his father, leaving both his school education and artistic ambitions to work as an apprentice at his Uncle's kitchen on the French Riviera. What he discovered there would shock him; an unsanitary kitchen, drunkenness and an often cruel working atmosphere where violence

was commonplace (not unusual in professional kitchens at the time). Rather than being discouraged however, a young Escoffier became determined to make changes to the way kitchens were run, with an instinct that the efficient running of a kitchen would culminate in excellence on the plate.

Following the breakout of the Franco-Prussian war, Escoffier undertook a stint in the military, where he served as a chef of Rhine Army High Command.

The need to preserve food for freshness and serve cavalry men under time constraints gave him an appreciation of canning methods and an understanding of food preservation.

He also admired the cleanliness, efficiency and teamwork of the culinary staff. Escoffier was determined to export a similar way of thinking into the professional kitchen. Upon discharge he took up a post as an executive chef at a fashionable restaurant which was frequented by local aristocracy, and began to implement the more disciplined method of kitchen management he'd experienced in the army. This included installing the brigade de cuisine which allocated a specialism to each member of the team – for example a fish chef and a pastry chef and so on, with a head for each department to ensure its efficient running. It's a method used to ensure a seamless service in professional kitchens to this day.

The need to preserve food for freshness gave Escoffier an appreciation and understanding of canning methods, and he admired the cleanliness, efficiency and teamwork of the culinary staff

He would soon be spotted by the now-famous hotelier César Ritz, where his journey to becoming King of Chefs (as Kaiser Wilhelm named him) would begin; Ritz would go on to become the manager of the Savoy Hotel in London upon the condition that Escoffier serve

as Head Chef, and it's here that Escoffier would establish The Savoy's place in London's culinary history. In 1898 Ritz and Escoffier collaborated on the opening of The Ritz in Paris, and in 1899 The Carlton hotel in London, where they unveiled the practise of à la carte dining, allowing diners to choose exactly what they wanted from the restaurant menu instead of being served a pre-determined menu, and revolutionising the dining experience forever.



Escoffier would instil a new order of hierarchy and discipline in professional kitchens, improving cleanliness and efficiency, changing the restaurant scene forever

Escoffier oversaw the kitchen of some of the world's finest hotels, including The Carlton, The Ritz and The Savoy



The King of Chefs is crowned

That Escoffier's initial rise to prominence came during France's Belle Epoque, or beautiful age, can be no coincidence; with Paris as the glittering jewel at the centre of this cultural movement, it was a time of transformation, ripe for culinary creativity, which also came to see the creation of The Eiffel Tower; the ascendance of Monet, Renoir and other stars of the Impressionist movement; and the rise of consumerism itself.

In the midst of this whirlwind, Escoffier became the first 'celebrity' chef – he would introduce himself, in his chef whites, to guests, a concept once unthinkable at a time when kitchen staff were seen as little more than servants. His culinary skill and charm made him a favourite with opera singers, actresses and other notable names of the day, with many of his dishes taking the names of his famous friends – including Peach Melba (after opera singer Nellie Melba), or Fraises Sarah Bernhardt, a delicious strawberry and cream dessert, named after the French actress.

Writing the ultimate culinary guide

In 1903 Escoffier edited *Le Guide Culinaire* with a vision that it would be used to train a new generation of chefs, creating a blueprint for modern French cuisine which is still used by Chefs worldwide today.

Among the delicious and now-iconic culinary creations Escoffier pioneered are the Sauce Béarnaise (a rich white sauce made with clarified butter, eggs and tarragon, often served with steak), Peach Melba (a combination of poached peaches, raspberry sauce and vanilla ice cream) and Lobster Thermidor (lobster cooked



Auguste's great-grandson Michel will be collaborating with ROSL on a special event in May



in a rich wine sauce, stuffed back into the lobster shell, topped with Gruyere cheese and browned under a grill).

Michel Escoffier – continuing a legacy of excellence

Continuing to extol Auguste's legacy of excellence and creativity in the kitchen is Michel Escoffier, head of the Escoffier Foundation and great-grandson of the man himself. Michel is an honorary President of Disciples Escoffier, an association created in 1954, bringing together gastronomes from all over the world, including 7,000 chefs, as well as an Advisory Board Member of the Escoffier School of Culinary Arts, which promotes culinary education and organises scholarships for chefs from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We're delighted to announce that ROSL will be collaborating with Michel Escoffier for a very special event at ROSL this summer, celebrating the wonderful flavours and techniques of French cooking that his great-grandfather pioneered many years ago, and paired with a delicious selection of wines. Visit www.rosl.org/events for more information

COMING SOON



ROSL

SUMMER PLACE FESTIVAL

5 – 7 September 2025

ROSL's festival dedicated to the arts; a programme of talks, concerts and workshops, all expertly curated by our Arts and Food & Beverage teams.

We'll be fusing ROSL's unique heritage with spectacular music, theatre, art, food, wine, wellness and much more, as we lift the curtain on a truly special four-day extravaganza of all things cultural. Open to all, come and sample our surroundings with events sure to inspire and delight in one Summer Place.

Keep an eye on our website and email newsletters for updates on the exciting events and speakers you'll find at Summer Place later this year.



Spilling the Tea

THE ORIGINS OF AN EDIBLE ICON

Delicate pastries, steaming pots of scented tea and piles of pillowy sandwiches filled with savoury concoctions; the Afternoon Tea has long been an institution steeped in ritual and elegance. But what are the origins of this now-iconic meal, and how is it adapted and enjoyed around the world? Editor Rosie Allen finds out

A potted history

Afternoon tea began to make a splash after its adoption by one of Victorian society's most influential socialites; Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, would become peckish during the wait between her midday meal and dinner (which by 1840 had become as late as 8pm) and complained of 'having that sinking feeling' characteristic of the afternoon slump. She ordered that a tray of tea, cake and bread and butter be sent to her room at 4pm each day to quell her hunger pangs and inadvertently changed the course of dining history. By virtue of her being an influential figure in high society, no doubt elevated by her friendship with Queen Victoria, Anna's penchant for this light meal soon became *de rigueur* in Victorian society, an occasion for dressing one's best and catching up on the society gossip of the day. It's even been argued that the afternoon tea helped to propel the march of feminism in London Society in its own genteel way; while the coffee house had long facilitated a male-dominated bonhomie, where intellectual discussions were forwarded and news of the day dissected, the afternoon tea gave women the freedom to entertain mixed company in the comfort of their homes for the first time.

The relaxed nature of the ritual also allowed women to stray from the dress codes of the day, abandoning the restrictive corset to allow for a comparatively laid back, if still glamorous, style of attire. In the 1870s the tea dress – still beloved on catwalk and high street today – was born, blending the refinement and femininity that ticked the boxes of Victorian formality, with a looser structure that allowed for imbibing the plentiful carbs that afternoon tea joyfully celebrates.

The tea evolved into the elaborate ritual of tiered stands and abundant sweet treats via the hotel trade, and by the 1920s and 1930s afternoon tea had emerged as the spectacle we see today, with restaurants serving stands packed with 'dainties' (as the tiny cakes and sandwiches came to be called). Betty's, the iconic tea shop in Harrogate, Yorkshire claims to be the originator of these tiers

of delectables, with their Swiss founder replacing the traditional slices of cake with miniature treats inspired by the patisserie of his home country.

A storied affair

Afternoon teas pop up regularly throughout literature, furnishing its reputation as both a lavish treat, and the cosiest of British traditions. In Daphne Du Maurier's 1930s set gothic romance *Rebecca*, the enigmatically unnamed narrator describes generous afternoon teas at the foreboding Manderley, the country house of her aloof aristocratic husband Maxim de Winter;

'Here I think of half-past four at Manderley, and the table drawn before the library fire. The door flung open, punctual to the minute, and the performance, never-varying, of the laying of the tea, the silver tray, the kettle, the snowy cloth. Those dripping crumpets, I can see them now. Tiny crisp wedges of toast, and piping-hot, flaky scones. Sandwiches of unknown nature, mysteriously flavoured and quite delectable, and that very special gingerbread. Angel cake, that melted in the mouth, and his rather stodgier companion, bursting with peels and raisins.' She'll go on to fret about the daily waste that the laying of such an extravagant tea must lead to, belying her

humble roots in contrast with the privileged indifference of the De Winters.

Jane Austen was a renowned fan of a good cuppa, and teas set the background to several important scenes in her novels, the theatre and pretence of the meal embodying that most Austenian of themes; the struggle between a rigid and formal social code and the secret longings and passions of those forced to abide by it. Then there's the famously eccentric tea party thrown by the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll's absurdist masterpiece, *Alice in Wonderland*, which on the surface appears to lampoon the eccentricity of the upper class ritual, but may in fact have a darker meaning. In her essay 'The Stupidest Tea Party in All My Life: Lewis Carroll and Victorian Psychiatric Practice', Dr Franziska Kohlt argues that the inspiration for the tea party draws



"There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea"

HENRY JAMES,
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

TASTY MORSELS

History, etiquette and pomp are as much part of Afternoon Tea's enduring appeal as the delicious meal itself, as these nuggets of trivia prove



Tea etiquette

Tea must apparently not be stirred in a circle; 'fold' the tea gently back and forth from top to bottom 2-3 times, before removing the spoon



Oldest teahouse

Twining's claims to be the oldest tea shop in London, standing on The Strand for over 300 years, and conveniently located near ROSL itself



Breaking the rules

The madcap attendants of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party confound Alice's principles of etiquette and propriety; a true inversion of Victorian England's values

direct influence from the tea parties held in asylums as 'therapeutic entertainments' and that 'Carroll's Hatter is consistent with Victorian asylum environments in other aspects, as impoverished hatters and other manual workers and artisans were frequently to be found among a pauper lunatic asylum's population.'

Afternoon tea or high tea?

Though often used as interchangeable terms, there's an important distinction between 'afternoon tea' and 'high tea'. The latter (sometimes simply called 'tea') is a phrase you might hear used by Englanders as a description of their evening meal, and has more practical roots; a heartier dinner eaten at a high table, with high-backed chairs (hence the 'high') it might have featured meat, pies, potatoes and bread alongside a pot of tea, designed to sustain working men (and during and after the second world war, women) after a day of laborious work.

You'll find cosier depictions, a kind of halfway between the extravagance of the afternoon tea and the domestic comforts of high tea, in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* when Lucy, one of the four child protagonists, is invited into the wonderfully cosy home of My Tumnus the faun and is delighted to be presented with '... a wonderful tea. There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake.'

The modern afternoon tea

The success of the Regency-set romance series, *Bridgerton*, has reignited an interest in the imagined romance of the Victorian tea. It's seen the demand for afternoon teas reach dizzying heights in the early 2020s, with fans wishing to experience the opulence and glamour of the ceremony, all indulged by hotels and restaurants keen to service this new interest with an abundance of themed teas and experiences.

Creative takes on the tradition have exploded in popularity too; in London alone you'll find a variety of eclectic takes on the afternoon tea, from a science-themed offering with cakes and sandwiches

served in a rocket-shaped stand; to a 'brunchette' accompanied by an all-singing-and-dancing drag show; to a sightseeing tea on an iconic (and moving) red London bus, plus everything inbetween.

And it's not just in the UK that the custom of taking tea has embedded itself into daily life either; in Sweden, the long-observed concept of *Fika* is more than the daily enjoyment of a cup of coffee and a pastry – it's a cultural tradition that emphasises the importance of togetherness as the ultimate celebration of life; to enjoy the company of workmates for a short break in the working day, to build friendships and social bonds over a shared love of cake and hot drinks (I'm sure we can all relate). Traditional treats include cinnamon or cardamom buns, chokladboller (chocolate balls rolled in desiccated coconut), smakakor (small shortbread cookies) and other national delicacies.

There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake

The formal afternoon tea has found its way around the world too, being adapted and elevated to cater for local tastes and celebrate a wide variety of flavours. Tai Chien Lin, Executive Pastry Chef of the iconic Raffles Singapore – famed for its classic glamour and luxury – tells us 'the cherished tradition of afternoon

tea reached Asia during the golden age of travel, with our founders, the Sarkies brothers, bringing the experience to the hotel in the 19th century, where it remains beloved today. Singapore's culinary heritage is diverse and represents a fusion of many cultures. While our Classic Afternoon Tea experience largely adheres to beloved tradition, complete with finger sandwiches, house-made scones and a selection of fresh pastries and sweets, our tea service is elevated by the exquisite tea selection we serve, which is hand picked by our tea sommeliers. Additionally our culinary team will, on occasion, vary the hotel's tea service by season to create unique iterations such as a Sakura Afternoon Tea every spring that is inspired by my memories of the cherry blossom season in Japan.'

ROSL's afternoon tea features delectable savouries and exquisite cakes from our in-house pastry Chef; see opposite for more details



Afternoon Tea AT ROSL

Elegant surrounds? Check. Pots of piping hot Birchall's tea? Of course. Stacks of expertly created savouries, pastries and scones? Obviously! We think ROSL provides the best afternoon tea in London, a cornucopia of delectable treats to be enjoyed in the stately surrounds of our Grade I-Listed Clubhouse. With an optional glass of Prosecco or Champagne, this is a delicious celebration of a venerable institution (much like ROSL itself).

Visit rosl.org.uk/dining for more information and to book





BIRCHALL'S TEA

At ROSL we're proud to serve tea by Birchall's, a producer focused on environmental sustainability with a penchant for impeccable provenance and excellent quality. Here Managing Director Daniel Graham brings us an insight into the history and running of this generations-old business.

What is the story of Birchall's journey and its place in tea's wider history in the UK?

We are an independent British family-run business with our history going back five generations to 1872, when Captain Birchall Graham planted some of the first high-grown tea in the misty hills of Darjeeling, India. He was posted to India as an officer with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment where he served for a number of years. In 1872 he decided to return to India, a land he had grown increasingly fond of over his time spent there, and used his savings to make a living by planting tea in Darjeeling.

Birchall's owns the UK's first fully solar-powered tea factory – what was the driving factor behind making this investment and what other sustainability initiatives have you undertaken?

We are on a mission to share with the world the best tasting, sustainable tea. Since 2017, we have invested millions in a purpose-built, environmentally thoughtful tea factory at Solstice Park in Amesbury, Wiltshire, which generates more power from solar than we consume in our production, so we actually put power back into the National Grid.

Could you tell us more about your work with the conservation charity, Tusk?

We've spent over a decade funding conservation efforts in Africa, where all of our black teas are exclusively sourced. For over 30 years, Tusk have helped pioneer an impressive range of successful conservation initiatives across more than 20 countries, increasing vital



protection for over 50 million hectares of land and more than 40 different threatened species. But the threat to Africa's unique natural heritage remains real and more urgent than ever. People can help Tusk by buying Birchall Great Rift and Decaf 80s packs, as well as our latest collaboration with Tusk, Birchall Serengeti (from birchalltea.co.uk).

Enjoy Birchall's tea when you stay at ROSL – visit rosl.com/accommodation for our latest room offers, or pop by the Duke of York Bar to enjoy a refreshing cup of tea in our lovely Grade I-Listed building



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PRISONERS TO PRINCES

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

Since 1956 The Duke of Edinburgh Award has created opportunities for young people to forge a sense of purpose, grow confidence and acquire the skill sets needed to navigate life. Here Secretary-General of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Martin Houghton-Brown explains how the programme continues to transform lives across the world

In 1994 aged 24 I stood in a small arc of young people, in St James's Palace, waiting nervously for HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh to present my Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. My father looked on with enormous pride, perhaps more than in anything I have achieved since. Maybe because he went to a school that had embraced the pedagogy of Kurt Hahn, the experiential

educator and mentor of a young Prince Philip, who fled Germany in 1933, because of his Jewish heritage and outspoken views on the indoctrination of youth.

Hahn's work on non-formal education was manifest during his leadership of Gordonstoun School, Scotland, but has provided a much more widespread legacy, from Outward Bound, the United World Colleges (which introduced the International Baccalaureate), Round Square Schools to – of course

– The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award for Young People. The Award holds to the very same principles and framework developed by Prince Philip and Hahn 70 years ago.

A young person commits to a series of goals, achieved over time, that will develop a skill, practise physical activity, provide voluntary service and undertake a challenging adventurous journey with a small group



of peers. The Award is attained at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, from age 14, 15 and 16 respectively, with an upper limit of 24.

Incredibly Hahn's only writings are summarised in very few pages by others. It is somewhat ironic then, that as a relatively new member of the Royal Over Seas League, that I should pen this article, probably writing more than Hahn did on the subject himself. He believed we should 'live' our ideas. Hahn said this of his philosophy, 'I regard it as the foremost task of education to insure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion.'

I must at this stage make a confession. When I was asked to consider taking up the role of Secretary-General of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Association, I had no idea that the Award was international, let alone in 130 countries, with over a million participants every year. Thankfully my ignorance did not bar me from the job. Having just completed my first year and visited the Award in Czechia, Scotland, Kenya, Uganda, India, Nepal, Canada, the US and the Caribbean I can tell you that the Award is highly regarded and thriving around the world. What is more we see that the young people who participate in the Award start to give to society in demonstrable and quantifiable ways. A study we undertook with PWC validated a social value for the Award. We ran the numbers for 2023 and the future contribution to society of the 2023 participants achieves £2.5 billion social value.

At the heart of the Royal Over-Seas League is a commitment to international conversations. Indeed, it is as I listen to the voices of young people located around the world, that I find myself profoundly challenged and inspired. One such moment was in my visit to Kathmandu, a city of tremendous warmth and welcome. I was invited to visit a detention facility for young people. The set up was stark. A concrete dormitory for 150 boys, populated with 250. Young men detained for petty theft through

to extreme violence. The facilities were basic, and a large dirt yard was provided for their exercise. A group of the young men were gathered in one of the halls above the dormitory. They sat cross legged and bare foot on the rugs on the concrete floor. Three of them stood up and came to the front. They had completed the Bronze Award during their imprisonment!

Standing in front of the assembly, they picked up a battered guitar and announced that for their skill they had learned to play the guitar and to sing. They then began to strum and hum and sing, but not in one of the local languages, but in Chinese. When they had finished one of them explained that he had a Chinese parent and that he had taught the others this song. Before I presented them with their Award, a mark of their commitment to changing their futures, and a recognisable sign for any future employer or educator, I asked about the Adventurous Journey, perhaps the most well-known part of the Award framework. They had for two days walked the prison perimeter fence (on the inside!) and camped in the prison yard. I am not sure I have ever met three young men more deserving of their award.

I have the honour of serving under the leadership of HRH Prince Edward, The Duke of Edinburgh, who is personally responsible for writing our global strategy, and who I am privileged to be able to work with very closely. He too received his Gold when he was 24. As I presented the Award to the young offenders in Nepal, I said to them, 'this is the

very same award, that by your efforts and determination, you have earned, that is presented, not just to prisoners, but to princes.'

I believe that we need to provide stories of hope for young people. To show them that in a world wrought it seems ever increasingly with division, we can show what unites us and what brings us to a greater understanding of each other. It is in my

view, a hidden power of the Award. Hahn said about his work in education that above all else we should seek for young people to grow in compassion.

The Award does this by stealth. We don't say 'come and attend the empathy award' or 'come and join our compassionate citizenship training'. Instead, we allow young people to develop blisters! It is during those adventurous journeys, as the challenge of the journey causes personal and group setbacks, that the emotional muscles of kindness and care are exercised, assisting one another and

We don't say 'come and attend the empathy award' or 'come and join our compassionate citizenship training'. Instead, we allow young people to develop blisters!

being helped. To persevere through those challenges with the help of others does more for compassion than any lecture might achieve.

It is interesting to think about what happens when a young person first starts volunteering, discovering the joy of service. We know that young people around the world are experiencing desperately poor mental

health, we can speculate as to why. What we can see, is that through frameworks like the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, we have solutions, that really work and really help to make the world a less lonely and a more hopeful place. That is why I am committed to seeing the one million young people currently participating extended to many millions more, and what better place to start sharing that vision than with my fellow members of the Royal Over Seas League. I hope to hear about how you, in your many diverse, international capacities, can enable more young people to expand their horizons.

Our spring 2025 art exhibition celebrates the richness of textile cultures around the world and the stories and traditions that inspire them. Here Arts Curator Louis Chapple talks us through the fascinating research and talented artists that have helped this project come to fruition



HEIDI PEARCE

Heidi Pearce is a London-based artist, originally from Kent. Predominantly working in sculpture, Pearce's work usually features the same dog-like form



SEÁN SAVAGE FERRARI

Using non-traditional materials embedded within his local topography, London-based artist Seán recontextualises traditional and contemporary approaches to landscape



VALERIE ASIMWE AMANI

A Tanzanian visual artist and writer, her practice interrogates the ways in which language, place and perceived reality are used to situate (or isolate) the self within community.

For the past couple of months I have been researching folklore and mythologies, and how they have historically been a source of inspiration for distinguished weavers and craftspeople across the globe. From Mexico and Peru, to India and Afghanistan, the creation of hand-woven rugs, tapestries and embroidered fabrics has held great cultural significance for thousands of years, and can often act as windows into worlds beyond our own through frequent depictions of spiritual deities and traditional folklore.

This research has formed the basis for our next exhibition at ROSL, *Mythic Thread*, where I will bring together a group of contemporary emerging artists who are redefining the traditions of textile craftsmanship and its relationship to cultural storytelling for a contemporary audience.

I first had the idea to curate an exhibition on this topic last April on a trip to Peru. In the capital Lima, I made a visit to the Amano Pre-Columbian Textile Museum, an internationally renowned organisation housing one of the most comprehensive collections of archaeological material from pre-Columbian Peruvian cultures, and a key contributor to the protection of the world's textile heritage.

The displays covered the emergence of textiles around the world, the first raw materials employed, and textile history within Peruvian territory, tracing the development of the Chavin, Paracas, Nasca and Inca cultures to name a few.

What immediately struck me about the complex designs was just how stylistically contemporary they seemed. Employing the use of striking colours, repetitive geometric forms, intricate loom-work and detailed storytelling, the visual intensity of so many of the works could easily lead a viewer to mistakenly thinking they had been created less than 50 years ago, rather than over a thousand.

Yet this should not be so surprising, as these revered works of art have been a great source of inspiration for many of the Western Art canon's most celebrated artists. A notable example is renowned contemporary artist Sheila Hicks, where extensive research on pre-Columbian textiles made a direct impact on her meteoric

success in the contemporary art market. There are indeed many cases where global traditional textile practices have influenced contemporary culture, often not to our knowledge. So I began thinking about an exhibition that would recentre contemporary dialogues on the craft through the artists' own terms.


Now fast forward to the first day of this year, my research unexpectedly continued much closer to home. I was visiting my family in Norfolk for Christmas, and the new year started as always with a long walk; this year around Beeston Bump. This part of the Norfolk coast is deeply shrouded in myth and folklore, no less than for being the site of many alleged sightings of Black Shuck – a black hound with fiery-red eyes revered in East Anglian folklore. It is said that Beeston Bump is the site of Black Shuck's lair. Walking through the rugged landscape as the heavy mist gave way to the early evening

darkness, it was easy to understand why such a setting had birthed this chilling English legend.

My walk through this part of the country leads me to introduce the first artist in our upcoming exhibition, Heidi Pearce, a London-based artist originally from Kent. Predominantly working in textile, sculpture and installation, Pearce's work often inhabits the same dog-like form, through which

she questions ideas of belonging, social interaction and humour through an uncanny lens. For this exhibition, Pearce is combining her signature textile 'creatures' with research into English folklore by creating a sculptural interpretation of the Black Shuck myth.

Our encounter with English folklore continues in the practice of exhibiting artist Seán Savage Ferrari. In his works, materials become collaborators, revealing the *Genius Loci* — the spirit of place shaped by history, memory, and ecology. Ferrari invokes the *Genius Loci* as a contemporary reflection of English folklore, where landscapes were seen as alive with spirits. By working with materials from the land, he transforms the landscape into an active participant through traditional handcraft techniques such as sewing, weaving and macramé.

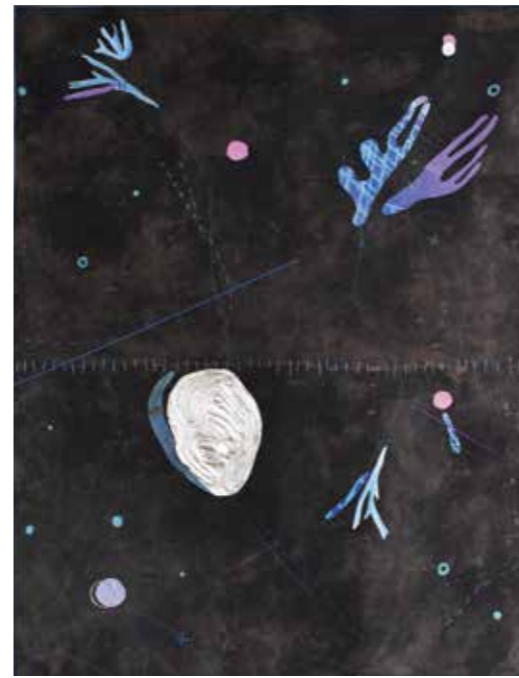
Looking internationally, the exhibition will also open encounters with the cultural heritage of the craft across Ghana, Bolivia, 

Textile is a universal language. In all of the cultures of the world, textile is a crucial and essential component... There's a level of familiarity that immediately breaks down any prejudice

SHEILA HICKS

MYTHIC THREAD

Contemporary textile and its global folkloric traditions



Clockwise from left: Divya Sharma There is this stupendous thing of beauty called compassion and therefore the world exists, Mother-Land; Seán Savage Ferrari I Will Repair; Valerie Amani beyond the currents; The Rise of Persephone Renin Bilginer; Valerie Amani Mahali



MARIA SAYGUA ANDRÉ
Franco-Bolivian textile artist and sculptor Maria lives and works in Brussels. She questions the different knowledges between Latin America and Bolivia in order to create new imaginary worlds



DIVYA SHARMA
London-based British Indian artist Divya's work is about reimagining – through her tapestries – vanished homelands, hidden civilisations, forgotten peoples and their ignored pasts



RENIN BILGINER
A contemporary artist from London, with dual British and Turkish heritage, Bilginer's practice examines identity as a transient state within the context of her mixed heritage

India, Argentina and Turkey. Exhibiting artist Emmanuel Boateng's practice explores layering and repetition in traditional Ghanaian Kente weaving processes to reframe and reimagine audiences' experiences in contemporary art spaces. Maria Saygua André's work takes the form of installations combining textiles and sculpture, questioning the different know-hows and epistemic resources between Latin America and Bolivia to create new imaginary worlds.

Divya Sharma reimagines place-making through the labour of her tapestries, vanished homelands and hidden civilisations. Exploring collective memory and ancestral knowledge, her tapestries draw on the cultural heritage of her native Tamil culture to reflect on universal values.

Rooted in her experiences as a woman with mixed British and Turkish heritage, Renin Bilginer's practice is driven by the

revival of craftsmanship within a fine-arts context. With a visual language inspired by Turkish textiles, the activity of myth-making is used to set the work within an imagined ancient world, inhabited by feminine beings presented as artefacts within an imagined archive.

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value

DR. MAYA ANGELOU

Ultimately, our next exhibition at ROSL will focus on the relationship between tradition and modernity within contemporary textile-making, where emerging artists shine new light on these ancient practices. Encompassing global histories and speculative futures, *Mythic Thread* will explore elements of spirituality, folklore and our relationship with the natural world...I hope to see you there.

**Mythic Thread will open on Thursday 13 March, 6-8pm. Please head to our calendar of events on the ROSL website to book free tickets for the opening reception.*



OUR GARDEN OASIS *A delicious start to spring*

We're delighted that members will be able to enjoy our beautiful garden for dining and drinks from 28 April 2025, subject to weather conditions. In the meantime, our 1910 Dining Room will be serving up a delectable series of themed menus and events throughout the spring months, including a celebration of all things pastry-encased for National Pie Week from 3 March, Pancake Day-centric dishes on 4 March and a special menu to celebrate St George's Day on 23 April. We'll also be creating a menu packed with international flavours to celebrate Commonwealth Week from 10 to 15 March.

You can also enjoy the mellow sounds of classical guitar as part of our Jazz Nights series, taking place on 28 March, 4 April, and 11 April to ease your way into the summer months to come. And expect a selection of flower-themed cocktails and floral wine specials to brighten up our bar to celebrate the iconic Chelsea Flower show from 21 to 25 May.

Keep an eye out for our twice-monthly events newsletters – sent 1 and 15 of the month – for more details of these events, or visit rosl.org.uk/events



From the Archive **Pip, Squeak and Wilfred**

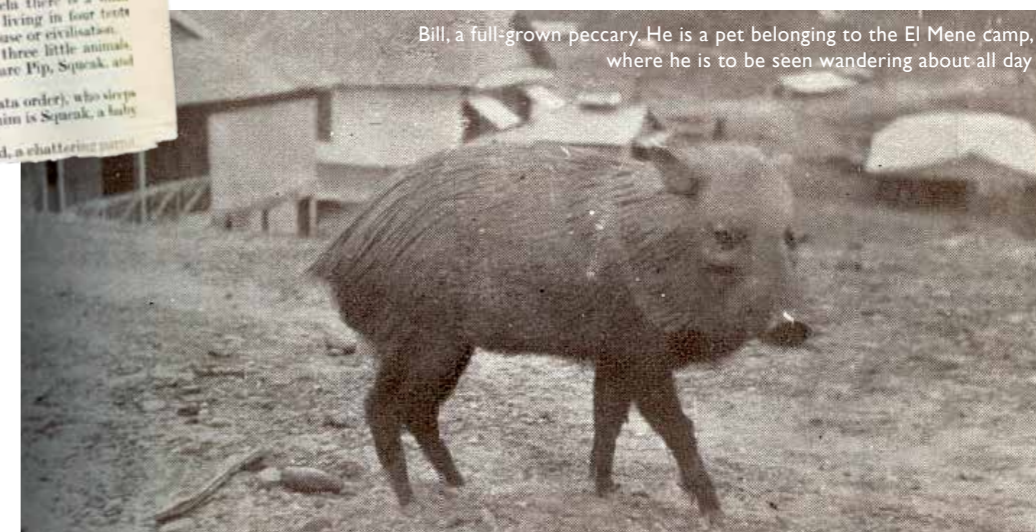
From the 1925 edition of *Overseas*, Killian E. Bensusan gives an account of three animals that kept him and his cohort company in their camp in the bush of Western Venezuela

Away in the bush in Western Venezuela, there is a small camp, inhabited by four Englishmen, living in four tents in a clearing, miles from the nearest house or civilization.

Pip is a lively baby peccary, who sleeps in the ground floor box, whilst just above him is Squeak, a baby monkey with a very long tail. On the top floor, on his perch, sits Wilfred, a chattering parrot, king of the roost.

These three companions start their day at 5.30am, when with a terrible commotion, Wilfred flies on to my pillow, Squeak climbs on the bed, and with a great deal of grunting and shaking of his head, puts out his tongue at me and pulls at my hair. In the meanwhile Pip has found his way underneath the camp bed and is prodding with his snout to further announce the dawn of day.

All day long they play together outside the tent and around the camp, Pip for ever bounding about and occasionally taking at friendly nip at Squeak's tail. Pip has four beautifully sharp tusks and like his parents will soon



Bill, a full-grown peccary. He is a pet belonging to the El Mene camp, where he is to be seen wandering about all day



Squeak in a gourd. These gourds are used by the men to carry water. This one usually hangs from a tree and is a plaything of Squeak's



Wilfred on one arm, Squeak on the other, and Pip eating a banana

have a bristly coat, mostly brown with a black stripe down his back and white underside. When he is annoyed these bristles stand on end like a porcupine's.

Squeak is a ball of fur, reddish brown all over with a golden-brown back and is possessed of an extra limb, a long tail, padded like his hands and feet on the underside. With this curled round a branch or even a nail, he can hang anywhere while preparing to drop to the ground, or perhaps engaged in eating a banana. He has bright brown

eyes, large mouth and a very powerful voice; hence the name of his kind in the West Indies – the red howler monkey.

Every morning the three of them have a banana between them. Greedy Pip always finishes first and makes for Wilfred, who flaps his wings, pecks Pip's snout

Greedy Pip always finishes first and makes for Wilfred, who flaps his wings, pecks Pip's snout and sends him after Squeak

and sends him after Squeak. But Squeak has learnt something and has either finished or climbed to safety with his portion.

All the day long these three do as they like, often playing together, and as soon as the day is over they go off to bed, each in his own place.

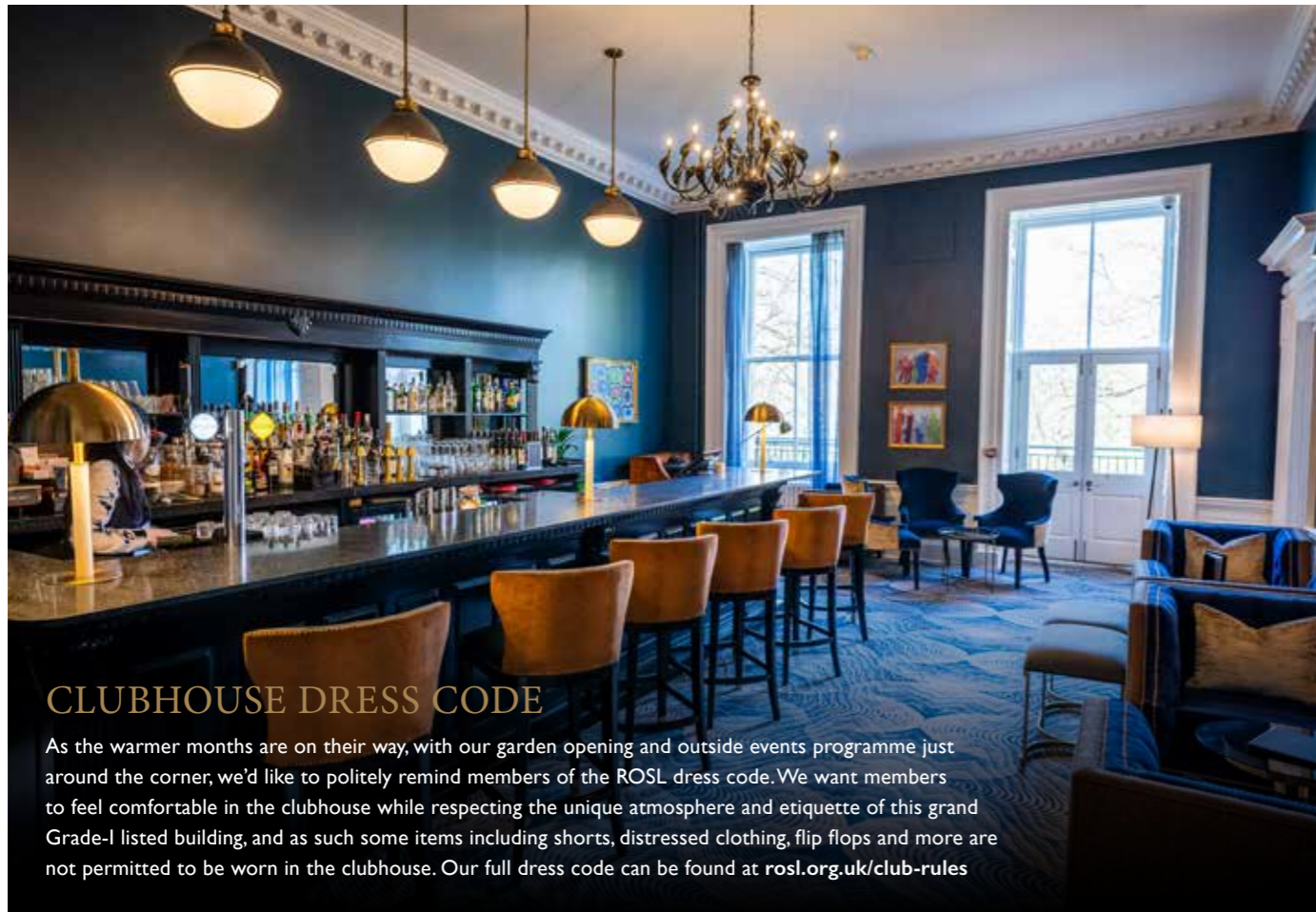
Squeak hates his weekly bath, howling most of the time, while Pip loves it and splashes about all the while. Wilfred, of course, will not be bathed, but prefers instead to take a shower bath, seated on the roof of the tent, in the rain.

A prestigious new role for ROSL's D-G

We're delighted to announce that ROSL's Director-General Dr Annette Prandzioch has been appointed a Deputy Lieutenant by the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London

A Lord-Lieutenant of a given county, which is a historic role, acts as the British Monarch's personal representative in a given United Kingdom's ceremonial county and is charged with upholding the dignity of the crown. They have performed various tasks throughout history, including raising local militia units, and numerous ceremonial duties. The role also includes the arranging of visits of members of the Royal family and escorting royal visitors; presenting medals

and awards on behalf of the Sovereign and advising Honours on nominations; participating in civic, voluntary and social activities within the Lieutenancy; and liaising with local units of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army, Royal Air Force and their associated cadet forces. We wish Dr Prandzioch the greatest success in her voluntary position as a Deputy Lieutenant, which she will undertake alongside her role at ROSL.



CLUBHOUSE DRESS CODE

As the warmer months are on their way, with our garden opening and outside events programme just around the corner, we'd like to politely remind members of the ROSL dress code. We want members to feel comfortable in the clubhouse while respecting the unique atmosphere and etiquette of this grand Grade-I listed building, and as such some items including shorts, distressed clothing, flip flops and more are not permitted to be worn in the clubhouse. Our full dress code can be found at rosl.org.uk/club-rules



Winter 2025 at the Calgary Branch: Madeleine King

The Calgary Chapter of ROSL held a cocktail party on 14 November and facilitated a conversation between some of Calgary's classical music leaders comparing their offerings with those available in London. It was intended as a fun comparison – and to make the connection with ROSL in London. The panel was made up of Marc Stevens, CEO of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Sue Elliott, CEO of the Calgary Opera and visiting conductor Sarah Ioannides, music director of Symphony Tacona, founding artistic director of Cascade Conducting and resident conductor of the NYO-USA.

The background to the panel composition was a belief that Calgary audience members and supporters are exceptionally fortunate to be able to enjoy the high quality of musical experiences presently available in the city. The panel discussion, expertly moderated by Connie Hunt, retired Alberta Appeal Court Judge and academic, amateur pianist, former Calgary Philharmonic Chorister and past board chair of the Honens International Piano Competition, provided the 40 or so guests with an authentic and intimate glimpse into the world in which the panellists operate, with all the many opportunities and challenges.

Geoff Parkin, Artistic Director of ROSL, provided a video welcoming Calgary guests to the London Clubhouse for the finals of ROSL's International

Music Competition in spring 2025.

We were fortunate to have the presence of our Honorary Patron the Hon. Selma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and her husband, the Hon Dr Zaheer Lakhani; their enjoyment of the lively discussion was evident in their active engagement. The program closed with thanks from ROSL Calgary Chapter Vice-President Jackie Engstrom.

Very positive feedback has been received from guests expressing real gratitude for the quality of the evening's conversation, and interest in a shared trip to London in March for the Music Competition and to attend the Commonwealth Day Service in Westminster Abbey.



L to R: Jackie Engstrom, Madeleine King, Marc Stevens, Sarah Ioannides, Sue Elliott, Connie Hunt

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MEMBER EVENTS

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group meets in person at the Club, as well as on Zoom for overseas members, on Wednesdays, once a month, to discuss primarily novels. The discussion starts at 5pm, but we meet beforehand for a drink and a chat, and afterwards for dinner (optional) at 6.30pm. Dates of meetings with books:
22 Jan 2025, *Peacock Cries* by Hong Ying; 19 Feb *Romantic Outlaws* by Charlotte Gordon; 26 March, *A Flat Place* by Noreen Masud; 30 April, *The Golden*

Road by William Dalrymple; 28 May, *The Kabul Beauty School* by Deborah Rodriguez; 25 June, *The Granddaughter* by Bernhard Schlink.

BRIDGE CLUB

The Bridge Club meets at ROSL every Monday 2pm - 4pm (except on Bank Holidays) to play ACOL Bridge. New members are welcome. Lunch at 12.30 is optional. If anyone is interested in a Beginners' course online or in person, please contact Membership.

BACKGAMMON CLUB

Meets on **Wednesdays 2pm - 4pm** and for lunch (optional) at 12.30. New members are welcome.

THEATRE & OPERA GROUP

We go regularly to the theatre, opera, ballet and modern dance. We also go to Glyndebourne every year.

To join any of the Member-led activities, please contact membership@rosl.org.uk





THE PASS IT ON PLEDGE

When you're finished with your copy of *Overseas*, please don't throw it straight into the recycling, pass it on!

We're encouraging our members to spread the word, so if you know any non-members that might enjoy reading the articles and the great window they provide into the world of ROSL, please pass it on to them.



Annual Music Competition Finals

Every week until Tuesday 25 March

An absolute treat for music-lovers, our AMC finals will be the musical jewel in our late-winter calendar, featuring the brightest and best rising music stars. Now in our 73rd year, the competition boasts of £75,000 in awards and has provided a springboard into the industry for scores of musicians. Join us to see who will join the illustrious ranks of our ROSL Annual Music Prizewinners and support the brilliant young musicians who take to the Princess Alexandra Hall stage: Strings Final (4 March), Strings & Keyboard Ensemble (11 March), Mixed Ensemble (18 March), AMC Overseas Final (25 March). Season tickets are available, or purchase individual tickets at rosl.org.uk/events Annual Music Competition finals.



Mozart and Brahms with the Goldscheider Trio Concert in Association with the Medical Musical Society of London

Friday 7 March, 6.30pm

We're delighted to welcome back french horn player Ben Goldscheider, together with violinist Callum Smart and pianist Richard Uttley for a brilliant recital featuring probably the most famous and celebrated piece in the horn trio repertoire, *Brahm's Horn Trio* in E-flat Major.

In concert with: Joseph Calleja

Tuesday 6 May, 6.30pm

Blessed with a golden-age voice that routinely inspires comparisons to 'legendary singers from earlier eras: Jussi Björling, Beniamino Gigli, even Enrico Caruso' (Associated Press), Maltese-born Joseph Calleja has quickly become one of the most acclaimed and sought-after tenors today. His expansive discography and frequent appearances on the world's leading opera and concert stages prompted NPR to hail him as 'arguably today's finest lyric tenor,' and led to his being voted *Gramophone* magazine's 2012 Artist of the Year. We're delighted to welcome Joseph back to the Princess Alexandra Hall stage for a special 30 minute performance followed by canapé reception.



News & views HIGHLIGHTS

Mythic Thread

Opening reception
Thursday 13 March, 6pm

Our spring 2025 art exhibition celebrates the richness of textile cultures around the world and the stories and traditions that inspire them. Be among the first to explore this fascinating collection at our free-to-view opening reception.



Casa Silver dinner and wine tasting

Thursday 15 May, 6.30pm

Casa began as a bottling business in 1989, but took the step to winemaking in 1997 when Mario Pablo Silver proposed to his father that they transform their business to focus on creating premium wines that really speak of the character of the unique vineyards which produce them.

The rest is history! We invite you to explore the delicious fruits of Casa Silver's labours in this tasting, in which you'll explore the mouthwatering diversity of Chilean wine alongside a specially-created dinner celebrating the fresh flavours of Chilean cuisine.

Book talk: *The Spy and the Devil* with Tim Willasey-Wilsey CMG

Thursday 15 May, 6.30pm

One of MI6's most closely guarded secrets was their secret agent (Baron Wilhelm de Ropp), who was in regular contact with Adolf Hitler throughout the 1930s. In this fascinating talk, Tim Willasey-Wilsey, Visiting Professor of War Studies at King's College London who served for 27 years in the Foreign Office, will describe the complexities involved in uncovering the life story of a secret agent and the effects which his reporting had on British foreign policy.



ARTS AND EVENTS CALENDAR

AMC Strings Final
Tuesday 4 March

AMC Ensemble A
Tuesday 11 March

AMC Ensemble B
Tuesday 18 March

AMC Overseas Final
Tuesday 25 March



Garden Re-opening
Monday 28 April

British Pie Week
From Monday 3 March

Mozart and Brahms with the
Goldscheider Trio
Friday 7 March

Saxophone Celebration
Friday 2 May



In concert with: Joseph Calleja
Tuesday 6 May

London Talk: The other side
of Victorian London
Thursday 8 May

Apollo's Cabinet and Trio D'Archi
Friday 23 May



Heritage at the Heart

A NEW WELCOME



RESTORE AND PRESERVE ROSL'S UNIQUE HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

As ROSL continues its journey in restoring our Grade-I listed clubhouse, Over-Seas House, we invite our members to support us to complete the final piece of the architectural jigsaw.

Vernon House dates back to 1835, and constitutes a significant part of the architecture. Our plan is to restore the entrance hall within Vernon House to its former glory. The arrival experience members and their guests receive is at the very heart of ROSL; a first impression is often the last impression.

We are a London-based institution with global reputation and outreach; the entrance is a gateway to a world of culture, heritage, public affairs, arts and dining.

To deliver this project, we need to raise £300,000. We are asking for the generous support from our

membership to reach this ambitious target. This would equate to £40 per member, an amount that we hope may be realistic for many, but any size donation will make a difference.

Should you be able to support this final significant development to the Royal Over-Seas League clubhouse, we will have an entrance hall that will preserve ROSL's architecture and heritage, creating a welcome that is fit for a King!

To make a donation, please scan the QR code, or contact the Director-General Dr Annette Prandzioch: b.neale@rosl.org.uk or visit the ROSL website <https://rosl.org.uk/product/wc-donation-heritage-at-the-heart-a-new-rosl-welcome/>



Thank you for your anticipated support

Director General | Dr Annette Prandzioch

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For those who prefer to travel independently, we can arrange short breaks with carefully-selected hotels, private transfers, and tickets for a concert, opera or ballet, to all the great cities in Europe.



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