

RNCM

ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

After earlier collaborations with the British Museum and Manchester's Victoria Baths and Whitworth Art Gallery, the Royal Northern College of Music produced its most complex and interactive project to date.

Held over three evenings at the Imperial War Museum North in July 2014, *After the Silence: Music in the Shadow of War* was designed to mark the centenary of the First World War. A total of 300 musicians performed 85 different works from the past 100 years, including 25 world premieres.

Instead of traditional sit-down concerts, the RNCM conjured up a curated soundscape, with images of live dance and devastated landscapes projected on to the museum's walls, so that visitors could make a personal journey through a "musical art gallery".

Along with poignant pieces by Mahler, Messiaen, Elgar, Penderecki and Steve Reich, composition students produced works inspired by trigger words associated with war, using solo instruments to express the loneliness soldiers often felt amid the noise and crowds of battle. Meanwhile, morale-boosting jazz and ragtime were performed in the museum café to evoke the tea dances and village halls where the horrors were briefly left behind.

"Using Daniel Libeskind's iconic building as both space and inspiration," said the judges, the RNCM commemorated the First World War "with imagination and verve" through "a creative blending of music, poetry, photography and choreography".