

Pro-Chancellor,

Shirley J. Thompson is an award-winning composer and artistic director, who is consistently cited as one of Britain's foremost classical music composers, as well as one of the country's most influential people of colour. In 2004, she became the first woman in Europe for more than 40 years to compose and conduct a symphony, which was commissioned to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Shirley was born and brought up in East London, where her earliest experiences of music involved escaping to a neighbour's attic to play the piano. She received her first formal music tuition aged 10, when she took up the violin at school, and quickly displayed a natural talent for the instrument. Shirley went on to lead the school orchestra and local youth orchestra, before securing a place to study musicology at the University of Liverpool.

After graduating, Shirley began writing music for concerts, as well as television, and became the first woman to compose and musically direct scores for dramas at Lime Street Studios. She became more involved in the world of concert music in the mid-eighties, when she set up her own ensemble and began to regularly compose and conduct her new works at London's Southbank Centre. Shirley quickly established herself as a distinctive voice in the art music world. Among her many achievements, she has co-scored a contemporary ballet which toured 40 of the world's most prestigious opera houses, and has had her music performed at several royal engagements. Her visionary concept, entitled: 'A London Story – a symphonic history of London from 1066 to the present day', provided the musical framework for the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony. Earlier this year, she was appointed an OBE for services to music.

Throughout her career, Shirley has broken new ground in contemporary, classical composition. As an educator, she has always encouraged her students to find their own voice and celebrate their distinctiveness.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Shirley J. Thompson and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*.