



# Living Lieder Culmination Concert

Pudsey Civic Hall, 11.00am  
Friday 27 March 2026

[www.leedssong.com](http://www.leedssong.com)



THE LIZ & TERRY BRAMALL  
FOUNDATION



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**Leeds  
Song**

# Welcome

Welcome to Pudsey Civic Hall and the sharing of this term's Living Lieder Project. Over the last three weeks, our team have been visiting schools in and around Leeds and introducing pupils from years seven to nine to Lieder or Art Song. The pupils have been learning about the historical context of these songs as well as singing them. They've also created their own lyrical responses to the poetry, drawing on cross-curricular themes, which we will weave together into a broader narrative today.

The students have been exposed to thinking creatively and critically, learning to appreciate that when using the imagination there are no explicitly right or wrong answers. They have also been introduced to what being in an ensemble means, how each person's contribution is equally vital. We hope that the students, having worked with professional artists and seen the way that they work, will use this experience to inform their future musicianship.

We've been so lucky to work with so many talented and imaginative young people and hope that you enjoy the culmination of

all their work today. We would like to thank all the teachers for welcoming us into their schools and for appreciating the importance of music as part of a rounded curriculum.



# About Leeds Song



Leeds Song was founded in 2004 as the charity Leeds Lieder+, and over 20 years later, it is now recognised as one of the UK's leading organisations dedicated to the art of song – and it is the only one based in the North.

Our founding principle is to involve more people in the joy of creating and experiencing song. We bring together exceptional artists from across the globe to celebrate the power of the human voice in its most intimate form. Through our work, we programme, commission, produce, collaborate, educate and enthuse – embedding our work in local communities and offering chances to participate in welcoming, creative activities for people of all ages, from retirees to children.

Our critically-acclaimed Festival has become a cornerstone of the country's classical music scene. It reliably attracts the finest international talent, growing audiences for the genre both in person and online. Our Festival commission brings new voices to the genre and new work to the song repertoire, while championing female composers and those from under-represented groups. Major voices who have written for us include Helen Grime, Errollyn Wallen, Daniel Kidane, Mark Simpson, Tansy Davies, Cheryl Francis Hoad, Judith Bingham and Sally Beamish. Our dynamic concert season expands our artistic offering, presenting classical artists at all stages of their careers.

Committed to introducing art song to ever-growing audiences, our award-winning in-school education programme works across 40 schools to introduce 1400 young people per year to the joys of singing and listening to classical song. Similarly, our community events take classical song out of the concert hall and into public spaces where new audiences can discover its beauty.

Led by Director Joseph Middleton, himself a professional pianist, and supported by a Board of seven trustees, Leeds Song consistently produces work of the highest calibre despite its small size, employing just three staff and a handful of freelance specialists. We work closely with peer organisations to maximise our impact, with partners including Opera North, Leeds International Concert Series, Leeds Conservatoire as well as Leeds, Sheffield and York Universities. We have forged international links and partnerships with Heidelberg Frühling, LiedStadt Hamburg, LiedBasel, and Vilabertran Schubertiade.



# Programme

From *Old American Songs*, **Copland**

**Neil Balfour:** At the River

**Bradford Academy:** Ching a Ring Chaw

**East SILC Roger Canon:** The Little Horses

**Dixon's Unity:** Simple Gifts

**St Bede's and St Joseph's:** The Boatmen's Dance

**Leeds Jewish Free School:** Long Time Ago

**Crawshaw Academy:** The Dodger

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**Rachel Fright:** 6 Romanian Folk Dances, **Bartok**

**Michelle Scally Clarke:** Original Poem

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**All:** *I bought me a cat*, **Copland**

# Neil Balfour

## Baritone

Neil Balfour (baritone, amateur) Indian-Scottish Neil Balfour is a British Baritone and Voiceover Artist. He started musical life as a pianist, punk-rocker and conductor, graduating from Leeds College of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music and the National Opera Studio, before falling in love with all-things-voice to tell stories. A former Britten Pears, Samling, Momentum and Concordia artist, he is the first opera singer to be booked by the Glastonbury Festival in the Astrolabe Tent and the first to beatbox in an opera at Longborough Festival Opera. Highlights in recent seasons include his American debut as Father Thumbprint for Portland Opera; Prince Yamadori Madama Butterfly and The Shoemaker (world premiere) for Welsh National Opera; Alice Through the Looking Glass (world premiere) for the London Symphony Orchestra; Jean Arp Sophie (world premiere) for Tête à Tête; a recital with Roderick Williams for Thaxted Festival and recitals about Schumann, Sondheim and Parfum for Oxford International Song Festival. Neil is the first classical artist for sE Electronics and NORD (world-leading microphones & digital pianos), director of ArtSongStory (compelling videos of art-song). He is also in partnership with Penhaligon's British Perfumers and VivoBarefoot shoes. His work as a voiceover artist has had over 100 million plays.



# Michelle Scally Clarke

## Poet

Michelle Scally Clarke is an artist, poet, playwright, writer and creative wellbeing facilitator with more than thirty years' experience working across schools, communities, universities and cultural organisations in the UK and internationally. Her practice centres on spoken word, collaboration and community-led creativity, with a strong focus on wellbeing, identity, mental health and racial justice.

Published by *Route Press* and the author of two books and albums, Michelle has worked alongside leading poets including Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jean "Binta" Breeze, Benjamin Zephaniah, Lemn Sissay, Brian Patten and Poet Laureate Simon Armitage. Her theatre work includes productions such as *Word Temple* and *Carnival Messiah*, and her commissioned plays *First Cut*, *Suitcase* and the NHS project *Who Genes?* have toured widely.

Michelle is the Creative Director of C.O.Y.C. (Clear Out Your Closet) in Leeds, leading projects that unite spoken word, music, performance and community wellbeing. She also performs with The Omowale Band, a fusion of word,

sound and rhythm, who will release a vinyl album later this year.

Her current work includes collaborations with Leeds Art Gallery and the Leeds Song Festival, alongside a new city-wide writing project, *Division*, exploring the voices and the voice of Leeds.



# Rachel Fright

## Pianist

Rachel Fright studied with scholarships to Pembroke College, Oxford and the Royal Northern College of Music, where she was a Junior Fellow in Accompaniment and won many prizes for her collaborative work. Following her performance as a Leeds Lieder Young Artist 2018, Rachel was awarded the Hester Dickson Prize to study at Oxenford International Summer School with Malcolm Martineau. Following graduation, Rachel pursued some private study with Julius Drake. Rachel performs regularly across the UK and has been featured on BBC Radio 3. She has a particular interest in song and choral music. Rachel works for the RNCM School of Vocal Studies and Opera and the University of York as a collaborative pianist and teaches at Yorkshire Young Musicians, Sheffield Music Academy and on the Rodolfus Choral Courses. She is also passionate about musical outreach, and works regularly for Leeds Lieder Festival, Live Music Now and SoundUp Arts to bring music to the community. She is the accompanist for Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus and Congleton Choral Society. In 2023, Rachel was a prizewinner in the Stella Jockel Memorial Prize for choral composition. Recent work has included repertoire work for an AHRC project on Julia Perry, a French song project with Jackdaws Music Education Trust, a children's opera with Clonter Opera Theatre and concerts at Oxford International Song Festival and Leeds Song Festival.



# Leeds Song Festival 2026

11 - 18 April 2026

View the full festival line-up and book tickets by visiting:

[www.leedssong.com/whats-on](http://www.leedssong.com/whats-on)

Tickets are free for nearly all events to anyone under 30 years old.

Use the code TRYSONG to attend any event at the 2026 Leeds Song Festival for £10.

This year, we're making it easier than ever for families to enjoy our festival. Using the code TRYSONG at the box office, one adult and one child can attend any festival event for just £10\*. Whether you're brand new to song or already love live music, our friendly, inclusive atmosphere is the perfect place to explore something new. Come along and share an unforgettable musical experience!



Experience  
Song

Leeds Song Festival returns from Saturday 11 April to Saturday 18 April 2026, bringing together some of the world's most captivating voices, creators, and rising stars for a week-long celebration of art song. Building on the record-breaking success of last year's festival, which saw ticket sales soar by over 30%, the 2026 Festival offers an ambitious programme spanning grand recitals, new commissions, community celebrations, and collaborations that reflect the vibrancy of the city of Leeds.

Headlining this festival include internationally acclaimed performers: Roderick Williams, Dame Sarah Connolly, Louise Alder, Huw Montague Rendall, Marianne Crebassa, Katharina Konradi, Axelle Fanyo, and Fleur Barron. Legendary artists Bernarda Fink, Sir Thomas Allen, Mark Padmore and Julius Drake lead this year's masterclasses, offering audiences the chance to witness great interpreters shaping the next generation of singers. *The nation's favourite choir-master*, Gareth Malone, returns to conduct our community Bring and Sing! chorus.

While the headline recitals take place in two of the finest recital spaces in Yorkshire, Opera North's Howard Assembly Room and Leeds Conservatoire's The Venue, Leeds Song will reach new audiences by taking the most eclectic programme of song to the very heart of the city's diverse cultural scene: for the first time to the trendy Left Bank Leeds, Leeds City Museum, The Royal Armouries Museum, and The Attic.

# A look back at our 2025 activity

4000

Our 14th Festival took place over 8 days with over 4,000 people participating as performers, speakers, audience members and workshop students.

14k

Live-streams and videos of Festival events have received over 14,000 views to date.

20

10 young singers and 10 pianists aged under 30 were selected by open audition from 122 applicants to join our 2025 Young Artists Programme.

334k

Awareness of the Festival and Lieder as an art form was raised through an intensive social media campaign. Reach for our social media platforms totalled 334,886; engagement totalled 59,817.

10

10 locally-recruited poets of all ages collaborated with 10 young composers from conservatoires and universities to write 10 new songs to add to "A Leeds Songbook".

£4,000

Over £4,000 of free concert, masterclass and other Festival tickets were given out to students and under 30 year-olds

30%

The Festival box office sales broke all our previous records, selling 30% more tickets than our previous best year.

1.8m

Print, broadcast and online Press, TV and Radio coverage reached an estimated audience in the region of 1.8 million.

1

A new song cycle was especially commissioned for the Festival: Seasons by Helen Grime.

1,400

In 2024-25 to date, we have worked with over 1,400 pupils from 41 schools in the region and 30 young artists and composers from 10 conservatoires and 4 universities.

660

Over 660 people attended talks and made up the audience for the public training sessions, enhancing their understanding of the art form.

# Support Leeds Song



The Friends of Leeds Song are the heartbeat of our community, offering generous support and valued ambassadorship throughout the year. Our Patrons and members of the Jane Anthony Circle are central to the success of Leeds Song. Your leadership and generosity make possible the extraordinary artistic quality and educational reach of our work.

Visit [www.leedssong.com/become-a-friend](http://www.leedssong.com/become-a-friend) to join.

## The Friends of Leeds Song

*The Friends of Leeds Song are the heartbeat of our community*

Friends membership starts annually from £50 or monthly from £5. As acknowledgement of your support, as a Friend you will receive:

- Priority Festival booking for you and a guest
- Invitation for you and a guest to exclusive Festival events
- Quarterly Friends newsletter

With Friends membership from £150 or monthly from £15 (via direct debit), your support will be acknowledged with:

- Priority Festival booking for you and a guest
- Invitation for you and a guest to exclusive Festival events
- Quarterly Friends newsletter
- Invitation for you and a guest to an exclusive recital

## Leeds Song Patrons

*Patrons and members of the Jane Anthony Circle are welcomed into a closer relationship with Leeds Song*

Patron membership starts annually from £500 or monthly from £50. Your generous support will be acknowledged by:

- Meet the artist at an exclusive Patrons' reception
- Post Festival party invitation
- Plus all Friends benefits

With Patron membership from £1000 or monthly from £100 (via direct debit), your support will be acknowledged by

- Meet the artist at an exclusive Patrons' reception
- Post Festival party invitation
- Support a rising-star artist (with acknowledgement if desired)
- Plus all Friends benefits

## The Jane Anthony Circle

*The Jane Anthony circle offers a bespoke acknowledgement to its members.*

Membership starts annually, from £2500, or monthly from £250, offering its members

- Meet the artist at an exclusive Patrons' reception
- Post Festival party invitation
- Support a headline artist/commission a new work (with acknowledgement (if desired))
- Plus all Friends benefits

By joining annually from £5000 or monthly from £500, your support will be acknowledged by:

- Meet the artist at an exclusive Patrons' reception
- Post Festival party invitation
- Supporting a recital, Festival event or Leeds Song project, such as the Young Artists Programme, Composers & Poets Forum, school education project, etc.
- Post concert dinner with Leeds Song Director and headline artist
- Plus all Friends benefits

# Our Supporters

Leeds Song is grateful for the support from the following organisations



THE LIZ & TERRY BRAMALL  
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# Our Partners

Leeds Song is delighted to be able to partner with the following organisations



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