Leeds Song

"Leeds Song Festival … from inner city to international, world-class music making."
The Guardian

Music *gives a soul to the* universe

2026 Festival

Wednesday 15 April at 5pm

Composers & Poets Forum Showcase and Exhibition

BRODRICK HALL, LEEDS CITY MUSEUM

LOTTERY FUNDED
Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

THE LIZ & TERRY BRAMALL FOUNDATION

Director's Welcome

Music *gives a soul to the* universe

It is with great joy and delight that I welcome you to the Leeds Song Festival 2026, a week-long celebration of one of the most intimate, expressive, and endlessly fascinating forms of music: the art song. Across seven days and a variety of venues throughout Leeds, we have gathered some of the brightest stars, most compelling voices, and most visionary creators in the world of song to present a programme as diverse and vibrant as the city itself.

Buoyed by the extraordinary success of last year's Festival – which broke all previous box office records by 30% – we return in 2026 with renewed energy, ambition and gratitude. This momentum would not be possible without the loyal and generous support of our Friends, audiences, donors, and those trusts and foundations whose belief in our mission underpins everything we do. My heartfelt thanks to each of you.

Faced with an embarrassment of riches, it feels almost invidious to pick out highlights, but as you turn the pages ahead you'll notice programmes from internationally acclaimed singers Marianne Crebassa, Katharina Konradi, Axelle Fanyo, and Fleur Barron, who bring fresh energy to Leeds. British stars Dame Sarah Connolly, Louise Alder, Huw Montague Rendall and Roderick Williams return, delivering performances that showcase the very best of British artistry. The opening and closing evening recitals are especially packed with joyous fare.

Our commitment to supporting the finest rising stars includes recitals by Austrian mezzo-soprano Patricia Nolz, our first lute-accompanied recital with Nardus Williams (partnered by early music royalty Elizabeth Kenny), and a performance from recent Deutsche Grammophon signing Theodore Platt. Leeds Song Young Artist alumni are also represented: Héloïse Werner's *Knight's Dream* will be performed by Helen Charlston and Sholto Kynoch, while Keval Shah, Felix Gygli and Jong Sun Woo all make welcome returns.

Festival favourites Roderick Williams and Iain Burnside explore new compositions inspired by Japanese haiku from leading American composer Libby Larsen, and we are proud to present a Leeds Song commission: *Dunwich*: an intermedia première by Martin Iddon blending spoken word, piano and video in a powerful meditation on history and memory.

This year's masterclasses feature renowned artists including Bernarda Fink, Joan Rodgers CBE, Mark Padmore and Roger Vignoles, whose guidance offers invaluable insight into the art of interpretation.

Our community offering, *Bring and Sing!*, returns with Gareth Malone, inviting all to take part in a joyous performance of Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. Meanwhile, the *Composers & Poets Forum* and the Art Song Challenge winner, Gerda Iguchi, broaden the boundaries of the genre with bold, interdisciplinary work.

The festival concludes with a specially curated recital by Dame Sarah Connolly, joined by prize winners from the Northern Aldborough New Voices Singing Competition – a fitting finale, celebrating both excellence and the future of song.

Leeds Song Festival is not just a series of concerts; it is a vibrant gathering of artists, audiences, and ideas, a space where music's power to connect, move, and transform is celebrated in all its richness. Whether you are a lifelong devotee of art song or discovering it anew, we invite you to join us for what promises to be an unforgettable festival.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Joseph Middleton
Director, Leeds Song

2026 Festival at a Glance

Saturday 11 April		
1 – 2pm	**Lunchtime Opening Recital**: Patricia Nolz and Joseph Middleton	The Venue, LC
3 – 5.30pm	**Bring and Sing! Rehearsal** with Gareth Malone OBE	The Venue, LC
6pm	**Bring and Sing! Concert** with Gareth Malone OBE: Haydn *Nelson Mass*	The Venue, LC
6.30 – 7pm	**Pre-concert Talk** with Richard Stokes	HAR
7.30pm	**Evening Opening Recital**: Louise Alder, Huw Montague Rendall and Joseph Middleton	HAR
Sunday 12 April		
10am – 12.30pm	**Festival Masterclass I**: Bernarda Fink	The Venue, LC
2 – 3pm	**Lunchtime Recital**: Nardus Williams and Elizabeth Kenny	Royal Armouries Museum
4 – 5.30pm	**Young Artists Study Event** with Richard Stokes	Recital Room, LC
6 – 7pm	**Friends of Leeds Song** Private Reception	Rooftop Bar, LC
6.30 – 7pm	**Pre-concert Talk** with Richard Stokes	The Venue, LC
7.30pm	**Evening Recital**: Marianne Crebassa and Joseph Middleton	The Venue, LC
Monday 13 April		
10am – 1pm	**Friends' Festival Masterclass II**: Bernarda Fink	Linacre Studio, HOC
2pm – 5pm	**Friends' Festival Masterclass III**: Mark Padmore CBE	Linacre Studio, HOC
Tuesday 14 April		
10am – 1pm	**Festival Masterclass IV**: Bernarda Fink	Linacre Studio, HOC
6 – 8pm	**Evening Recital**: Roderick Williams OBE and Iain Burnside	The Venue, LC
9pm	**Late Night Recital**: *Dunwich*: An intermedia première by Martin Iddon	The Attic
Wednesday 15 April		
5 – 7pm	**Composers & Poets Forum Showcase and Exhibition**: 'A Leeds Songbook'	Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum
8pm	**Evening Recital**: Helen Charlston and Sholto Kynoch	Left Bank Leeds
Thursday 16 April		
12 – 1.30pm	**Young Artists Showcase**	HAR
3 – 6pm	**Festival Masterclass V**: Joan Rodgers CBE	Linacre Studio, HOC
6.30 – 7pm	**Pre-concert Talk** with Dr Katy Hamilton	HAR
7.30pm	**Evening Recital**: Axelle Fanyo, Fleur Barron and Julius Drake	HAR
9.45 – 11pm	**Late Night Lieder Lounge** with Leeds Song Young Artists	HAR Bar
Friday 17 April		
10am – 12.30pm	**Festival Masterclass VI**: Roger Vignoles	Linacre Studio, HOC
1 – 2pm	**Lunchtime Recital**: Felix Gygli and Jong Sun Woo	HAR
3 – 6pm	**Festival Masterclass VII**: Anna Tilbrook	Linacre Studio, HOC
6.30 – 7pm	**Pre-concert Talk** with Mark Rogers	HAR
7.30pm	**Evening Recital**: Katharina Konradi and Joseph Middleton	HAR
9.45 – 11pm	**Late Night Recital**: Gerda Iguchi: Art Song Challenge 2025	HAR Bar
Saturday 18 April		
11am – 12pm	**Coffee Recital**: Theodore Platt and Keval Shah	The Venue, LC
2 – 3.30pm	**Young Artists** Finale Concert	The Venue, LC
6 – 6.30pm	**Pre-concert Talk** with Dr George Kennaway	Rooftop Bar, LC
7pm	**Festival Closing Recital**: Dame Sarah Connolly and Joseph Middleton (and Northern Aldborough New Voices Singing Competition Prize Winners)	The Venue, LC

HAR = Howard Assembly Room | LC = Leeds Conservatoire | HOC = Howard Opera Centre
All information correct at the time of publication.
Leeds Song reserves the right to change artists, programmes and events if necessary.

Box Office: 0113 223 3600 | boxoffice@operanorth.co.uk | www.leedssong.com/whats-on

Wednesday 15 April 2026, 5pm
BRODRICK HALL, LEEDS CITY MUSEUM

Composers & Poets Forum Showcase and Exhibition

'A Leeds Songbook'

"... what do you get if you speed-date composers from northern colleges with local poets? The answer is 'A Leeds Songbook', an inspiring portrait of the city and its inhabitants across the centuries. The atmosphere was relaxed but the buzz was electric..."

(Clive Paget, *The Guardian*)

As part of the ongoing Leeds Songbook project, our Composers & Poets Forum adds new works to the song canon—poems by local poets about the people of Leeds, set to music by visiting composers and performed by our Leeds Song Young Artists. For 2026, the project expands to include visual artworks reflecting the themes of these new songs, presented in an exhibition alongside the showcase performance. This forms part of Music Leeds Us: Celebrating 60 Years of Music in Leeds, a special exhibition at Leeds City Museum (10 October 2025 – 28 June 2026), marking six decades of Leeds Conservatoire, one of our key partners.

Firmly rooted in the local community, the Songbook draws on months of collaboration and Festival workshops. Join us to experience the powerful results in this inspiring showcase and exhibition.

With special thanks to our Composers & Poets Convenors, **Martin Iddon** and **Hannah Stone**, for leading the project and workshops.

Careful
Music by Eléna Rosemary Adams
Words by Rachel Curzon

Performed by Zheng Jiang (counter-tenor) and Yihan Zhao (piano)

POEM

Careful –
after SICK; an installation by Sarah Roberts

you might step on a snake,
you might approach the water cooler
for a cure, it might be festooned, greenly.
Green coil in the sulphur. Good for you.
Snakes in the sickroom. Snakes draped
hissless on the bunk bed's metal slats.
Snakes, slipped from their staffs. O Asclepius.
O Sarah, rolling and shaping and glazing,
hanging her hopeful snakes on the drip
                the drip
        the drip
    that pivots on its castors
that winds a rattling path through all
the paraphernalia. That is, the glass decanters
the pastel drying rack the pills the ceramic
dolphins the bonbons the pills the cake stands
the kidney dish the glitter stickers the pills
the glass lung the hula hoop the glass heart
the bracelet charms the glass capillary mesh
the trappings. Say it.
                Sarah moves about
healthily, looped with her necessary snakes.
Careful sister. Careful daughter, winding
a path through another's sickroom, thinking
of the sisters and the brothers and the mothers
and the fathers all moving in sickrooms
all dancing carefully in the spaces where
the paraphernalia is not.
    The windows are open to the street.
The grass is a real green and its smell is grass.

Rachel Cuzon

PROGRAMME NOTE

Careful – takes as its inspiration the work and experiences of Leeds-based artist Sarah Roberts. Beginning as an ekphrastic response to Roberts' Leeds University Libraries installation, 'SICK', this collaborative project between poet Rachel Curzon, composer Eléna Adams, visual artist Louie de Silva and piano-countertenor duo Yihan Zhao and Zheng Jiang, interrogates the complexities of the caring role, and explores Roberts' experiences of growing up 'sick-adjacent'. The project juxtaposes elements of claustrophobia, confinement and precarity with hope, and a careful reaching after joy.

Rachel Curzon and Eléna Rosemary Adams

Careful (Snake in the Sickroom)
Artwork by Louie de Silva
Oil on canvas

Careful (Snake in the Sickroom) is a painting produced by Louie de Silva that responds to Rachel Curzon's poem *Careful –*. Inspired by Sarah Roberts's exhibition 'SICK' from 2025, the poem responds to the complexities of growing up surrounded by illness. Within this painting, the piece acknowledges the difficulties of this up-bringing and the debilitation of illness, while also offering hope and acceptance. Through the motif of the snake, it represents at once a connection to life but also a more sinister aspect to living. With the colours, they have been purposefully picked to produce a sickliness on the one hand, but a liveliness and vivacity one is still able to lead with enduring illness on the other. Altogether, the piece composes to show the complexities and nuance of sickness, which isn't all together negative but also not naïvely straightforward.

Louie de Silva

BIOGRAPHIES

Eléna Rosemary Adams (Composer)
Eléna Rosemary Adams (b. 2002) is a composer, soprano and music tutor from and based in Greater Manchester. Currently in their final year of MMus studies in Composition at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), they also hold a first-class BA (Hons) in Popular Music from Salford University. As a composer, Elena has written for and worked with ensembles including the BBC Singers, the London Sinfonietta, the RNCM Wind Orchestra, and the RNCM Community Choir. Their compositional style draws on post-impressionism, experimental jazz, contemporary classical music, Balkan folk music, and musical theatre.

Rachel Curzon (Poet)
Rachel Curzon was born in Leeds, and now lives in North Yorkshire. She is the recipient of an Eric Gregory Award, and her début pamphlet, *Faber New Poets 16*, was published in 2016. More recent work has appeared in *Poetry Review*, *The London Magazine*, *The Rialto* and elsewhere. Rachel has been shortlisted for the Oxford Poetry and Bridport Prizes, won the Poetry London Competition last year, and was a New Northern Poet for 2025. She is currently working on a project based on the life of Charlotte Brontë.

Louie de Silva (Artist)
Louie de Silva is an abstract oil painter born in Huntingdonshire, 2002. He is currently studying Fine Art and Contemporary Cultural Theory at the University of Leeds. Raised in the countryside, de Silva is deeply inspired by the natural world, where his work projects an acceptance of how our senses respond to living in the moment. With the image emerging from the canvas, his paintings explores an opticality, where de Silva encourages his viewers to weave in and out of the paint to create a narrative and find a feeling of their own.

Catch
Music by Nate Chadwick
Words by Nicky Kippax

Performed by Carleigh Ross (soprano)
and Curtis Vetter (piano)

POEM

Catch
After S Myers, Fishermonger, Kirkgate Market.

It's Monday. Myers and Son stand
at the bow of the week: wellied,
shirted, tie'd. They follow the chefs' eyes
swimming across the trout.

Is that fillet, scale and skin, boss?
Fillet, scale and skin?

Tuesday is the winter scene
inside a Kirkgate snowglobe.
A fluent knife turns fish scales
into a sequin blizzard.

Midweek sees blue crab and pomfret
under milky scallop moons, a cradle
of clam and samphire. They rest
as if they beat the net.

Is that fillet, scale and skin, sir?
Fillet, scale and skin?

On Friday we listen for the ghosts
of the Penny Bazaar, four turned heels
from Fishmonger Row where the men work,
bellies to the brill, quick as eels.

Is that fillet, scale and skin, ar-kid?
Fillet? Scale? Skin?

Saturday is meted banter, but the Myers' blade
does the real talking. Tongues are saved
for the stern: a last pitch, a last push,
last of the catch to go.

Nicky Kippax

PROGRAMME NOTE

Catch is a poem-song, created by poet Nicky Kippax and composer Nate Chadwick as part of the Leeds Song Festival. The piece explores the heritage and craft of Myers, a local family-run fishmonger which has been trading for several generations inside the 120-year-old Kirkgate Market - one of the largest of its kind in Europe and a site of huge architectural significance.

A steady and melodic vocal line is brought to life by soprano Carleigh Ross and reflects the daily rituals and community focus of this working family. Curtis Vetter on piano depicts the lively Kirkgate environment where a mix of customers, tourists and chefs interact with skilled tradespeople. We hope you enjoy helping us to celebrate these vital (and until today, largely unsung) Leeds traders.

Nate Chadwick

Steve Myers, S. Myer Fishmongers, Leeds
and *Market scene at S. Myers Fishmongers, Leeds*
Artwork by Jessica Cooper
Pencil portrait
Digital portrait

1. *Steve Myers, S. Myer Fishmongers, Leeds*
After finding out Nicky Kippax had chosen to focus her poetry on Steve Myers, I was immediately drawn to his bustling business and all the colours of the fish. I chose to focus my main drawing on Steve himself and used a wide variety of graphite pencils to achieve the final result. I hope he likes it!

2. *Market scene at S. Myers Fishmongers, Leeds*
I wanted to highlight the many people who work extremely hard on Steve's business and so decided to draw an interesting bird's eye view of a typical day in the life of a fishmonger. This piece was drawn using a digital pen (which looks and feels very similar to a pencil) on an ipad screen.

Jess Cooper

BIOGRAPHIES

Nate Chadwick (Composer)
Nate Chadwick is a Leeds based composer/performer. Nate enjoys creating music featuring graphic notation and photography. He is a proud member of the LGTBQIA+ community and enjoys telling queer and non-male stories through music.
(He/They)

Nicky Kippax (Poet)
Nicky Kippax is a poet from Yorkshire. She's a Northern Writers' Award winner and her work is most recently published in *The London Magazine*, *PN Review*, *Oxford Poetry* and *The Rialto*. Nicky also co-hosts Rise Up! - a celebration of poetry and the spoken word in York.

Jessica Cooper (Artist)
Jessica Cooper is a self-taught artist whose practice explores a wide variety of subjects and materials, with a current focus on portraiture and the human form. After studying at Durham University, she trained as a teacher and later worked as a nanny, a role that has enabled her to combine meaningful work with the continued development of her artistic practice.

You can follow her journey on Instagram at @jessicacooperdraws and at jessicacooperdraws.com

Alive
Music by Ella Cookson
Words by Zelick Mendelovich

Performed by Bruno Meichsner (baritone)
and Wan-Yen Li (piano)

POEM

Alive
My love had faded,
Crashed and burned,
I met a soul that was concerned,

When they look into my eyes,
I feel alive, I feel alive,
Summer heat, winter snows,
A special friendship grows and grows.
I feel alive.

Now babies fill her slender arms,
A hectic life with double charms,
They feel exhausted with delight,
Days' not day, nights' not night,
They feel alive.

Embraced into their family fold,
I never feel at all I'm old,
Their path is set, their journey starts,
I'm blessed, I'm in their loving hearts,
I feel alive.

They took me in, a strange old man,
Who now believes in God's big plan,
I say good night, my step is light,
In empty streets I walk the night.
I feel alive.

Zelick Mendelovich

PROGRAMME NOTE

Alive reflects on the quiet renewal that comes from being truly seen. Out of a period of isolation and fading selfhood emerges a rediscovery of purpose, found in meaningful connections and the abundance of everyday moments.

The call of the starling, a bird often associated with friendship and strong non-familial bonds, marks a figurative seasonal shift: a gentle emblem of spring and restored vitality, symbolising growth and the return of warmth and light.

Told from the voice of a patient observer, not swept away by the constant motion of life, we are reminded that nothing is lost or wasted in stillness; it is there, in the quiet moments of presence, appreciation, and connection, that we rediscover what it means to feel alive.

Ella Cookson and Zelick Mendelovich

I Am Alive
Artwork by Michael King
Oil on wood panel

This portrait was created in response to the song's reflection on renewal and belonging. The lyrics follow an older man whose life has faded until he finds connection through an unexpected friendship and is gradually drawn into the warmth of a family. The repeated phrase "I feel alive" became the emotional centre of the painting. Rather than illustrating the narrative directly, the portrait focuses on the presence and humanity of the figure, suggesting a life shaped by experience but renewed through care and companionship. The textured oil paint allows the face to emerge slowly from the surface, echoing the way the song reveals a quiet rediscovery of purpose, connection and hope.

Michael King

BIOGRAPHIES

Ella Cookson (Composer)

Ella Cookson is a composer and pianist from Lancashire, currently in her third year of study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Inspired by connections between music and other art forms, her creative approach is shaped by observation and reflection, often drawing on themes of nature and human nature. Ella particularly enjoys interdisciplinary collaborations and the creative dialogues they inspire; previous projects include scoring for the National Library of Scotland's Digital Archive collection, a commission for the Nordic Viola Ensemble inspired by a Barbara Hepworth sculpture, and a collaboration with modern ballet dancers and choreographers.

Zelick Mendelovich (Poet)

Zelick the relic,
he's Sabba Dabba Doo.
He writes poems for babies,
Youngsters, old wives and toddlers two.
With his head in the clouds,
He walks the streets of Leeds,
Smiling at perplexed strangers,
Clipping wayward branches off naughty insolent trees.
Once he was a sailor,
Who only sailed one sea.
Three children later,
He only drinks mint tea.
He is handsome, diverse and he loves to rhyme.
He considers being angry, a very terrible crime.
Humour is his hammer, horn and friendly tail.
And so he vigorously wags himself, dispersing every veil.
He disects every didact, to assert his own deduction.
For the world is empty, full,
Of obverse ornate obsfuction.

Michael King (Artist)

Michael King is a portrait painter based in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Working primarily in oil paint, his practice focuses on psychologically intense portraiture built through expressive brushwork and layered surfaces. Originally trained as a biomedical scientist, he holds a PhD in developmental biology and spent several years working in research before turning his focus toward painting. His work explores identity, vulnerability and human presence, often portraying cultural figures and individuals who exist outside conventional narratives. King's paintings combine elements of realism with a raw, painterly approach that emphasises texture, structure and emotional atmosphere.

QUEUE THEORY.
Music by Rob Crehan
Words by Vanessa Napolitano

Performed by Daniel Sauer (baritone)
and Honoka Komoda (piano)

POEM

Queue Theory
is a theory of people,
a theory
for moving people,

he pushes his glasses up
walks through the bagel shop
that was a cinema

(knows every building
that used to be a cinema,
plaques blueing on the floors)

moving people to the films
from his vantage point-
Undercroft to Carriageworks-

in their soft cloth forms and boots,
light night and Easter best,
second coffee in hand,

a labour of love,
a favourite game,
this,

is a theory of people
is a theory of people
  Tetris pieces

joining hands
    moving story
into place.

PROGRAMME NOTE

Queue Theory is a poem inspired by Jamie Cross. The poem uses his vantage point as speaker of the poem, and specific observer of Leeds, but also invokes 'queue theory' to explore themes of community. Both the brick-like stanza structure and reference to tetris/queueing are concrete elements that I am delighted Rob has responded to in his work.

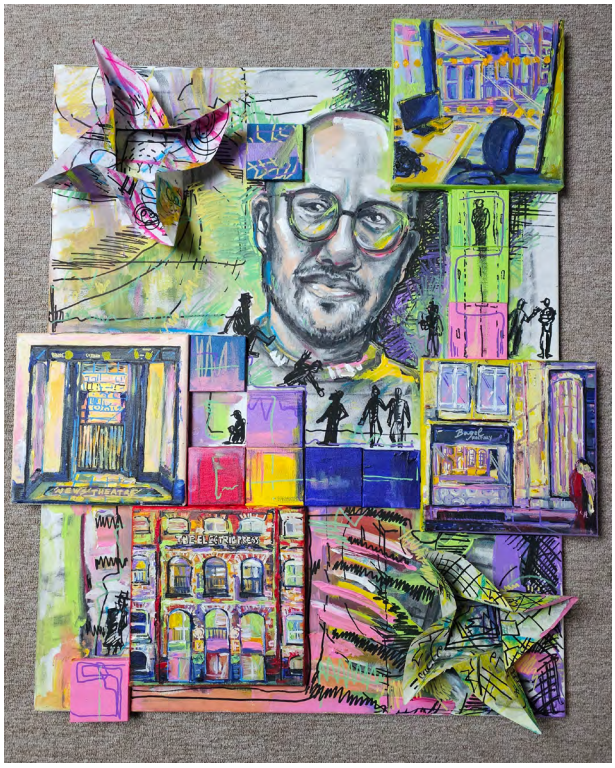
Vanessa Napolitano

QUEUE THEORY. is a song for baritone and piano inspired by the poem of the same name by Vanessa Napolitano. Drawing on themes in the text - particularly the act of queuing - the performers move through a queue-based system in which neither player may proceed until the other has finished. This structure creates an intimate, interdependent dialogue between the two musicians, allowing either performer to obstruct, manipulate, or facilitate the other's progress.

The musical material likewise reflects imagery from the poem. Like Tetris blocks, a limited palette of musical shapes is presented, rotated, and reversed, producing a deliberately angular, stark, block-like character.

Rob Crehan

Queue Theory
Artwork by Maria Radulescu
Mixed media (acrylic and soft pastels)
on canvas and paper



Queue Theory centres Jamie and his work for Leeds Film Festival. As Jamie was showing me his work and his office, telling me about events he's run, I realised the core of this piece should be the bold and effervescent ways in which people are linked together through him. Places and people, like Tetris blocks, like snapshots of Leeds that create bonds through art, through Excel sheets and collaboration. At the heart of it all, there's Jamie and his work, but also Leeds and its culture – its streets, its movies, its art. They all create a system – Leeds, Jamie and the people of Leeds – making our city richer and better every year.

Maria Radulescu

BIOGRAPHIES

Rob Crehan (Composer)
Rob Crehan (b. 1991) is a British composer from Luton, Bedfordshire. His work draws on visual art and literature, with a current focus on guided improvisation, spontaneity, and performer agency. His music has been performed widely across the UK and internationally by leading artists and ensembles. After leaving formal education early, he pursued composition through self-directed study before entering conservatoire training, completing degrees at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he is currently undertaking doctoral research on post-discipline practices in composition, alongside an active commitment to music education.

Vanessa Napolitano (Poet)
Vanessa is a British/American poet based in Yorkshire. Her forthcoming pamphlet, 'the lives we had before' is due out with Stanchion Press in May 2026. She was a 'Word Up North' New Northern Poet 2025. Her work can be found in journals including *Humana Obscura*, *Interpreter's House, And Other Poems, Porridge* and *Clarion* and in several anthologies. She writes on themes of grief, place, nature and the domestic. Her first full collection *I'll know I'm home* is due out with Black Cat Press in 2027.

Maria Radulescu (Artist)
My name is Maria Radulescu, and I am a mixed media visual artist and illustrator from Bucharest, Romania, based in Leeds. My work is mainly illustrative (comics, zines and sequential storytelling), but I am currently interested in creating beyond the space of illustration. I am passionate about working in multidisciplinary ways, continuing to explore the intersection between writing, music and image-making. Through *Queue Theory*, I manged to move my practice more widely into mixed media through painting and using zines in untraditional ways. Now, I am working on a graphic novel about my experience living in Leeds and looking to become a teacher within the arts. IG:@_psyche_art

Margaret
Music by Julien Durand
Words by Charlotte Oliver

Performed by Klara Solén (mezzo-soprano)
and George Herbert (piano)

POEM

Margaret

Swapped Wales' soft lobes of sessile oak
for Beirut's spikes of cedar
in answer to that still small voice
of calm.

She stood alongside those in need,
she welcomed all and all were fed
while bombs and bullets rained,
while fire spread.

Leeds avenues anoint her now
with falling golden leaves –
her gaze still fixed above
beyond the trees.

Charlotte Oliver

PROGRAMME NOTE

Through an exploration of texture, both words and music open in a state of quiet stillness, evoking the sound of wind moving through trees and the fall of leaves – a place where God might be sought and found. A fragile calm gradually gives way to turbulence as Margaret fulfils her calling to work in Lebanon during civil war; a dissonant, repeating figure emerges, restless and insistent, shaping the central struggle of the work.

In time, this same material is transformed. The pattern is recontextualised as a simple folk-like melody. What emerges is not the naïve peace of the opening, but something steadier and more reflective; a tranquility matured by time and what has passed.

Charlotte Oliver and Julien Durand

Margaret
Artwork by Seohee Lee
Mixed media on canvas

This painting is based on the poem *Margaret*, following the traces of a life that moves across places and time. Rather than depicting a single moment, the work brings together fragmented memories and landscapes, suggesting that different times can coexist within the same space.

Flowing forms and layered surfaces create a sense of continuity, where boundaries between past and present begin to dissolve. The yellow areas, inspired by the golden leaves in the poem, move across the composition as shifting traces. The work seeks to reflect on how individual experience is never isolated, but remains entangled with other memories, places, and ongoing realities.

Seohee Lee

BIOGRAPHIES

Julien Durand (Composer)

Julien Durand is a London-based composer and performer currently studying on the MMus Composition programme at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. With a background in jazz, Brazilian music, and electronic production, his work moves fluidly between ambient, textural sound worlds and more visceral contemporary experimentation.

Across his writing, Julien maintains a meticulous attention to detail and a fascination with colour, texture, and sonic atmosphere, shaping music that is both exploratory and deeply expressive.

Charlotte Oliver (Poet)

Charlotte Oliver writes for adults and children. Published widely, her poetry has been broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and 6Music, and she performs regularly around the UK. Commissions include work for the BBC, the National Literacy Trust and the FEED Project, as well as collaborations with visual artists, such as the installation *Words in the Landscape* at Sutton Bank in the North Yorkshire Moors. An Ilkley Literature Festival *New Northern Poet*, Charlotte facilitates poetry workshops and is one of The Poetry Society's *Poets in Schools*. Her first full collection, *Nothing Happens but Everything Happens*, is forthcoming with Valley Press.

Seohee Lee (Artist)

Seohee Lee is a painter currently studying MA Fine Art at the University of Leeds. Her practice explores inner landscapes, focusing on the relationship between memory, emotion, and spatial ambiguity. Working with layered surfaces and dark tonal fields, she creates images that resist immediate clarity, allowing forms and meanings to remain unsettled.

Omar/Apus Apus
Music by Florence Lloyd
Words by Hannah Stone

Performed by Martina Neubauer (soprano)
and Alexander Karl Koschka (pianist)

POEM

Omar/Apus Apus -
'Swifts are my fable of community' (Helen Macdonald)
(Lines in italics are from her *Vesper Flights* or *Collins Book of Birds*)
……

I am cleaning the kitchen when Omar invites me to share his food

(may be residents, partial or passage migrants, summer visitors)

slices of bread pop up from the toaster; two boiled eggs are peeled and broken open

(in outbreaks of bad weather, often survive for days without food)

there is no honey for the yogurt; he spoons the last of the jam into a dish

(nest in obscure places, in dark and cramped spaces)

with a flat blade, he prises open a handful of walnuts

(spend most of their lives in flight)

sweet steam rises from rose-petal tea

(frequently make weather-evading flights)

the sharing blesses both of us

Hannah Stone

PROGRAMME NOTE

This piece aims to capture the peaceful resonance of a quiet moment between Hannah and Omar - an asylum seeker based in Leeds. Hannah's descriptions of their encounter are interspersed with facts about swifts and the species' patterns of migration from a reference book about birds and Helen Macdonald's title essay in her book *Vesper Flights*.

Florence approaches the tensions of freedom musically through the relationship between soprano and piano; the vocal line alternates between rhythmically interlocking with the piano while remaining tonally centred, and breaking away, allowing the melody to wander more freely. The rhythmic motifs are taken from traditional Kurdish percussion repertoire, in respect of Omar's native country. They hope the piece can both celebrate the freedom of migration while recognising the cost it can carry.

Florence Lloyd and Hannah Stone

The Tale of the Martlet
Artwork by Patrick S. Ford
Mixed Media Sculpture

The Tale of the Martlet comprises four elements housed in glass jars and stored within a dark-stained wooden box that isolates the elements from the everyday world, allowing and encouraging us to perceive them in a new way. The four elements are preserved as if they are precious, worthy of preservation and protection for their symbolic value rather than an inherent monetary value. During times of stress, trauma and emotional upheaval it is often simple things that leave the greatest impression upon us.

Half in and half out of the wooden box is a crinkled, well used map of the region that leads to the city of Leeds, found within the wooden box. A small pocket compass lies upon the map and is tethered to a small metal effigy of a bird, perhaps a swift, that seeks to effect or enhance the functioning of the compass in some favourable way.

Patrick S. Ford

BIOGRAPHIES

Florence Lloyd (Composer)

Florence Lloyd is a British composer whose practice centres around vocal writing, electronics and electro-acoustic performances, and multimedia or cross-disciplinary elements (aligning with their passions in dance, theatre, poetry, and fashion). Florence is a postgraduate student at the Royal Academy of Music with a scholarship under the tutoring of Helen Grime and Philip Dawson. Their current developing creative practice centres on personal storytelling, often drawing upon lived experience to shape music that is both vulnerable and authentic. Florence's most recent work, chamber opera *Broken Ivy*, was performed in March in Marylebone, with sights to take it to the Tête à Tête festival in autumn, and they are currently working on an electro-acoustic commission for CHROMA Ensemble and a work for clarinet and 2 modular synthesisers, both to be performed in the spring.

Hannah Stone (Poem)

Hannah Stone has published a number of volumes of poetry, including collaborations with other poets, most recently *The Invisible Worm* (Indigo Dreams Publishing, 2023). She has an extensive portfolio of activities in the poetry community of Leeds, including as poet-theologian for Leeds Church Institute, editor of Dream Catcher literary journal, and enjoys ongoing collaborations with composer Matthew Oglesby. In 2023 her poetry was featured in the Guardian Poem of the Week column, and won the David Oluwale Memorial Writing Competition. She holds degrees in English (London), Theology (Leeds), and Creative Writing (Leeds Trinity).

Patrick S. Ford (Artist)

Patrick S. Ford has been exhibiting consistently for the last 40 years and has work in several public collections in Europe and Asia, and in numerous private collections. Originally trained as a sculptor, Ford has also explored printmaking, drawing and performance art.

His practice often seeks to take artmaking out into the environment to encourage observation, reflection and response, and just as often focuses on the borderbetween disciplines.

He is currently working on a PhD research project under the working title 'The Leeds Arcades Project: Creating Contemporary Myths'.

The Language of Flowers
Music by Maxwell Nelson
Words by Lydia Kennaway

Performed by Mariana Rodrigues (soprano)
and Andrew Cowie (pianist)

POEM

The Language of Flowers
for Carole Taylor, florist

The shop on the corner's a room full of bloom:
Roses from Ecuador, tulips from Holland.
Freesias – Golden Yellow, Oberon, Blue Moon –
sweeten the air.

Now the door opens and wind chimes ring.
She puts down her work, and is ready to face
our little griefs, the joyous news we bring,
and heartburst sorrows.

Here is the bride-to-be.
Here is the friend with a 'Thank you'.
Here is the man saying sorry.
Here is the lover convinced that this bliss
is something brand-new.
Here is the mother who's lost a child.

Lilacs and lavender for the bride-to-be.
Daisies and daffodils for the loyal friend.
Roses, always roses, for the man saying sorry.
Narcissus for the lover, today's and tomorrow's,
and all of the others.
Feverfew and rue for the mother bereft.

The shop on the corner's a room full of bloom:
Roses from Ecuador, tulips from Holland
beginning to fade.
It's late afternoon.

She locks the door and lowers the shade
then bows her head
to a hyacinth's
healing perfume.

Lydia Kennaway

PROGRAMME NOTE

Flowers often act as metaphor in the art song tradition, but here they are prescribed by the florist for ailments ranging from lovesickness to bereavement. This is a 'day-in-the-life of' play, where the stage is set, the cast of characters enters one by one, and the florist must be prepared to respond to whatever crosses her threshold. In the end, the curtain falls on the florist, with only the word 'healing' in the final line hinting at her own state of mind.

Lydia Kennaway

The opening theme is adapted from 'The Sprig of Thyme', a Lincolnshire folksong, specifically a recording from 1908 by Joseph Taylor. It is meant as a short love letter to the form. Following the introduction, there is a brief piano interlude which was transcribed from the sound of the wind chimes first heard when entering the shop of the florist—for whom this poem was written. The rest of the piece was composed with the rhythm and emotion of the words in mind.

Maxwell Nelson

Bloom
Artwork by Skyla West
Brass and Copper Sulphate
A chemical print of a digital photomontage using copper sulphate onto brass

To represent Lydia Kennaway's poem *The Language of Flowers*, I started by breaking down her poem into meaningful subjects. Types of flowers, impactful words, connotations. I thought about connections formed through flowers, the types of situations one might find themselves in and who this might be with. I thought about moments I'd received and given flowers - birthdays, achievements, grief. From this, I searched through my archive of photographs, spanning across 10 years, to find moments symbolic of these feelings. A hug, a doe and her fawn, nature in bloom. I gathered new images of Carole and her flower shop, drawing together the past and present while imaging futures. With these images, I played around in photomontage to bring forwards a narrative of love, loss, and life. I chose brass and copper sulphate for the print; the pinks and blues with the brass felt like sun on new petals, though the images became faint in the process, just as moments come and go, fade and last.

Skyla West

BIOGRAPHIES

Maxwell Nelson (Composer)
Maxwell Nelson (26) is an American singer, songwriter, and composer pursuing a master's degree in music composition from the University of York. His love for melody and lyricism is prevalent and well demonstrated in each of his works—a core part—the heart and lungs of his craft. Not long after he began composing at age 18, did he find tuition in composition from Nick DiBerardino (who is now Provost and Dean of the Conservatory at Curtis Institute). Following this tutorship, he began studying voice and art song under Dr. Graham Bier (a graduate from York). Under these tutors Maxwell developed both his voice as a composer and as a vocalist and had forever instilled in him an adoration for voice and song.

Lydia Kennaway (Poet)
Lydia Kennaway's pamphlet, *A History of Walking*, was published by *HappenStance Press* in 2019. She has an MA in Writing Poetry from Newcastle University and won the Flambard Prize in 2017. Her work appears in 18 anthologies, and in magazines including *PN Review*, *The Rialto* and *Stand*. Lydia is currently Poet-in-Residence with Thin Ice Press in York. In June 2026 they will publish *The Marker Committee*, an artist's book featuring both her illustrations and poems. Lydia has read at the Ilkley Literature Festival, Poetry at Aldeburgh and Leeds Lit fest. She is a New Yorker living in Yorkshire.

Skyla West (Artist)
Skyla Isabella West (BA Fine Art, 2025, University of Leeds) is a Leeds-based experimental printmaker from Pontefract, West Yorkshire. She has exhibited work at Ones to Watch 2026, Sunny Bank Mills; There Is Not A Fashion, Hyde Park Art Club (Leeds, 2025); Art Materiality: Edition One, No Place, The Handbag Factory (Vauxhall, London, 2025); and Make No Bones (Leeds, 2025). She is currently undertaking a graduate residency with Serf Studios, Leeds.

My practice combines photography, digital photomontage, print, and sculpture to materialise thoughts and investigations into nostalgia, the passage of time, and mindfulness. Using a childhood digital camera, I gather documentary-style images of everyday moments and wait for nostalgia to surface. From these images, I select the most symbolic imagery relating to connection and place, and digitally montage them into ambiguous, metaphorical compositions. This forms a private language of vulnerability and personal experience. These photomontages are printed through a combination of chemical etching and screen-printing techniques. Chemicals corrode and oxidise the images into and onto metal, creating an experimental form of image-making inspired by industrial textures. Observing how rust forms and transforms on these surfaces, carrying its own sense of time, becomes integral to the work. The holistic process connects memories, present experiences, and imagined futures, encouraging me to value the spaces between moments and embrace the discomfort of yearning and reflection.

A Train of a Hundred Thousand Cancer Survivor Stars
Music by Elliott Park
Words by Tim Karen Bucknall

Performed by Naomi Boot (mezzo-soprano) and Viviana Țaga-Radu (piano)

POEM

A Hundred Thousand Cancer Survivor Stars
(A poem dedicated to John Goligher, The Colorectal Unit, Leeds Teaching Hospital. A pioneer bowel cancer consultant, lecturer, researcher and medical scientist. Who helped people like me who had bowel cancer, and are now bowel cancer survivors.)

A train of hundred thousand cancer survivor stars, each one magnificent, brave and resilient in their own special way.

For one very unique man, gave them the gift of returning back to a normal life after bowel cancer, and embracing a cancer free day.

****

John Goligher, a bowel cancer consultant, a pioneer in his own medical field, led the way for a better life for bowel cancer patients and survivors.

An hyper giant the largest star in the sky, guiding all of the other stars, who are thrown into the dark black void of bowel cancer, and desperate to get well again all strivers.

****

John Goligher and his team of doctors, researchers and scientists revolutionised bowel cancer, treatments became kinder, advances in surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, stomas and colostomy bags.

They gave us a second chance of living after bowel cancer, and understanding nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about and no more conversational red flags .

****

If it wasn't for ' JG' and his legacy he left behind, there'd be no John Goligher Colorectal Care Unit, at Leeds Teaching Hospital. Be no caring NHS staff providing support, advice and information to us bowel cancer patients and our beacon of hope.

The doctors, consultants and surgeons, Colorectal Care Nurses, Enhanced Recovery Programme Nurse Specialists, Radiologists, pathologists and oncologists, saved our lives and helped us to cope.

****

His pioneering hard work and dedication, the medical science poetry of the universe, an eternity of reflecting his bowel cancer research infinite inner soul.

As bowel cancer survivors, silent stars twinkling in the night sky, John Goligher teaches us all stillness by being in the moment and working towards ringing the bell and our 'All Clear' goal.

****

John Goligher gave us back our humanity and self respect, a silent witness to our longings to be healthy again, and our earthy worries fade in the presence of the beauty of the stars.

We are no longer feeling abandoned, frighten, ashamed or embarrassed, thanks to Goligher, our pride and dignity have been restored, we are cancer survivor millionaires.

****

The life saving cycle of John Goligher's work, and the care of the NHS, makes us cancer survivor stars still standing tall, our pain turned into our power and with our heads held up high.

Tonight a star ignites shining brighter than it's ever shine before, an eternity of gratitude for his work, as we all sparkle and shine brightly in the night sky.

The darker the sky the brighter the stars, The NHS helped us to have another shot at life, back to being ourselves again to get through bowel cancer, having a stoma and colostomy bag be grateful and once again thrive.

The NHS never failing in its community of cancer care, as after treatments we return to a full and active life again, as hundreds and thousands of us bowel cancer patients count our blessings and survive with gratitude in our hearts, as we celebrate being alive.

Karen Elizabeth Bucknall

PROGRAMME NOTE

When setting Karen's poem to music, I wanted to capture the beauty of her words in a way that wasn't saccharine or sentimental; the harmony underneath the voice changes rapidly between several different keys and modes, and the metre never settles into a stable pulse. I also included a part for finger cymbals for the singer to play as well as singing: a nod to how the brightness of stars is often evoked in orchestral music, but also a sonic reference to the bells which cancer patients ring at the end of their treatment.

Elliot Park

The poem is about our Leeds hero John Goligher, who was a Leeds-hospital-based bowel consultant/surgeon, researcher, scientist and lecturer. He wrote many papers and books on colorectal care and disease, and a pioneer in his own medical field.

Leeds Teaching Hospital has the John Goligher medical unit named in his honour. I am a post bowel cancer survivor, with a stoma and colostomy bag, and celebrating 5 years in remission. Without the NHS and John Goligher's break through work. I wouldn't be here today and living a happy and fulfilling life.

The stars reference: us cancer patients and survivors are all shining stars. We are the brightest star in our own sky. Stars give us comfort and hope for a better future.

Karen Elizabeth Bucknall

Goligher's Stars
Artwork by Saranna Watkins
Acrylic on board

Goligher's Stars portrays the shining stars in the night sky, representing those affected by bowel and colorectal cancers. The deep blue colours are associated with the ribbons of colorectal cancer awareness. Enshrined within the painting is the hope provided by the pioneering work of Professor John Goligher (1912-1998) involving colon and rectal surgery at Leeds General Infirmary from 1954 to 1978.

Saranna Watkins

BIOGRAPHIES

Elliot Park (Composer)

Elliott Park (b. 1994) is a composer, conductor, and researcher from the North East of England. Recent projects include works commissioned from Theorbo Today for theorbist Toby Carr (later broadcast on BBC Radio 3), a prize-winning piece for the Delius Singers, and emerging composer schemes with Britten Sinfonia and Psappha. His compositions have been recorded on the Delphian and Prima Facie labels. Elliott studied composition and musicology at the University of Durham and Queens' College, Cambridge, and at the Royal Academy of Music with Tansy Davies and Edmund Finnis. He has recently returned to Cambridge to study for a PhD in composition under Richard Causton.

Karen Elizabeth Bucknall (Poet)

Karen Elizabeth Bucknall, is 55 and from Birmingham. She is a bowel cancer survivor, with a stoma and colostomy bag. This doesn't define Karen, being the amazing, brave, strong and resilient woman she is defines her.

Karen has a BA Hons in Sociology, Coventry University (2020) and is studying for her Micro Masters in Writing For Performance And The Entertainment Industries, at Cambridge University. She is a stand-up comedian and performance poet, and also enjoys doing acting/extras and modelling work too.

Karen's connection to Yorkshire: she was a Haven Mate (Butlins red coat) for Haven Holidays on the North Yorkshire Coast. She loved spending many happy Summer seasons working the holiday camps, and a little piece of 'hi de hi Auntie Karen' will remain forever in Scarborough, Filey and Bridlington.

Saranna Watkins (Artist)

Saranna Watkins is based in West Yorkshire whilst studying Fine Art at Leeds Beckett University. Her work currently explores both the physical and political landscapes utilising her previous experience working within the mental health arena. She is a multidisciplinary artist using a variety of materials including painting, collage, textiles, film and music.

The Valley
Music by Joanna Ward
Words by Mike O'Brien

Performed by Kelsey Thomas (soprano)
and Edward Lloyd (pianist)

POEM

The Valley

Here's the wall that my dad built
He built it years and years ago
See the pattern in the bricks
Diagonals
Built to last, to stick around
For years and years and years

Here's my old backyard, the wall
I used to climb it every day
The quickest way to my mate's house
Opposite
Then off we'd go over the road
To the valley of a thousand spears

Fun and laughter in the woods
Tag and racing in the fields
Collecting stuff and sculpting wood
Whittling
The sounds of music, birds and wind
All playing for our ears

That wall's still here and so am I
A little older every day
We worked to save the valley too
Campaigning
My Mam and Dad still live nearby
After all these years

My mate is gone. We'll all go soon
But Primrose Valley will live on
And other kids will grow up here
Enjoying
Imagination in the wild
Sparking minds to have ideas
All launching from this Valley, here
Like a thousand spears

Mike O'Brien

PROGRAMME NOTE

Mike wrote the poem, *The Valley* after a walk through Primrose Valley Park in Leeds with his friend Len Forbes, who has lived close to it since his childhood in the 1960s. Throughout Len's life in teaching he has seen value in encouraging individuality and self-expression in children, both in their creative work and play, and sees the valley as a place where much of his own character was developed in childhood pursuits and games such as "the valley of a thousand spears" which he played with his mates. For many years the park was neglected and misused and the possibility of building on the land was often mooted. Along with friends and family, Len campaigned to save the area whilst working on its maintenance, so that future generations would be able to enjoy it as much as he had. It is now recognised as an important part of the city's natural landscape.

Mike O'Brien

Vestige
Artwork by Hannah Guy
Fine Art Baryta photo rag Hanhemule Paper, Aluminum chamfer tray frame

This photograph was made in direct response to the poem, which positions Primrose Valley as both a lived site and a repository of memory. The text moves between the material and the ephemeral, from the permanence of the wall to the instability of recollection, and I wanted the image to hold that same tension. Rather than illustrating specific lines, I approached it as a translation of its structure and feeling.

I was particularly drawn to the way the poem expands time. Childhood is described as something continuous, almost resistant to ending, even as loss is folded into it. The image sits within that expanded temporality, where evening lingers and refuses to fully resolve into night. The use of artificial light interrupts the natural cycle, extending the moment in a way that echoes the desire, present in the poem, to hold onto experience.

The young figures are separated and self-contained. They operate less as individuals and more as traces, or positions within memory that cannot fully coincide. This fragmentation reflects the poem's movement across time, where the past is not recalled as a fixed sequence but as something layered, partial, and continually re-encountered.

At its core, the work is concerned with how a place carries experience beyond those who move through it. The Valley is not only a backdrop but an active structure that shapes memory, imagination, and identity. In this sense, the photograph considers how personal histories become embedded in landscape, and how they persist, shift, and are reactivated over time.

Hannah Guy

BIOGRAPHIES

Joanna Ward (Composer)
Joanna Ward is a composer and performer from Newcastle upon Tyne, based in London. Her practice revolves around experimental score-making methodologies, and exploring what happens when improvisation is situated alongside simple, repetitious musical ideas. She likes to work closely with other artists on her projects which often layer live sound with recorded sound, video, and/or other media. Joanna is currently pursuing a part-time PhD in Composition at the University of Leeds, with a project which explores labour and idleness, and how these concepts manifest in a composition practice. Alongside her practice as a composer and performer, Joanna works part-time as a charity fundraiser.

Mike O'Brien (Poet)
Recently retired from his career as a teacher in special education, Hull born Mike has had his poetry published in a range of collections and journals both home and abroad, including *Pennine Platform*, *Ionosphere* and *The Penmen Review*. In addition, he has self-published many of his own essays and poetry, and published collections of other poets, both online and in print, through his Sixty Odd Poets project. He enjoys a wide range of music and is thrilled to have his work transformed into a song for piano and voice.

Hannah Guy (Artist)
Hannah Guy is a Leeds-based fine art photographer who works with dreams as sites of image-making. She transforms fragments of the unconscious into staged tableaux that sit between documentary and fiction.

Her collaborative, empathetic practice treats dreams as social texts: emotion moves between people, shaping shared meaning. Through vivid colour and quiet gestures, she traces these currents in what she calls "truthful fictions," making internal, unstable experiences tangible.

Guy graduated from the University of Leeds (First Class Fine Art, 2024) and completed a bursary year with Leeds Art Gallery and Assembly House, mentored by Hannah Starkey.

Fruits of Knowledge
Music by Sean Whytock
Words by Tim Boardman

Performed by Lisa-Marie Lebitschnig (soprano)
and Amelie Warner (piano)

POEM

Fruits of Knowledge
From the corner
of my eye
a wisp,
a movement,
coming up from the earth.

I came upon her presence
through the flowers
through the showers
bright eyed by natures powers,
carrying the apples of the earth,
she is part of the garden,
part of Gaia's breathing birth

and when she speaks
the land listens...

Along the allotment branches
she walks with a collective calm,
pruning, grafting,
each gesture learned
pruning, grafting
before I had fears
pruning, grafting
the rhythm of her years.

The trees lean toward her;
she plants the old apples,
reading them like books.
She knows their names,
their families, their looks,
their forgotten flavours.
I watch her gather history
in the curve of her hands.

and when she speaks
the land listens...

She tends what was,
so that what will be
may rise with love.
And still she moves,
knowledge in her footsteps,
tomorrow in her touch

Pruning, grafting.
Pruning, grafting.
The rhythm of centuries
beating softly in her hands

and when she speaks
the land listens

Tim Boardman

PROGRAMME NOTE

Fruits of Knowledge is a lyrical meditation on inheritance, care, and embodied wisdom. The poem centres on a gardener-figure whose knowledge is carried through practice rather than theory: pruning, grafting, tending, and listening. She is both individual and archetype, rooted in the soil yet linked to Gaia and the long memory of the land.

Tim Boardman

Encapsulated by Tim's words, I was inspired to compose a song that evokes wonder, mysticism, meditation and deep admiration for a woman tending to the land, connecting her to life, nature, the changing seasons, as well as an ancient and spiritual connection with the earth. The words could be heard in thethird-person perspective, perhaps from a friend, sister, admirer, or even the spirit of Mother Earth herself. Alternatively, they could also be interpreted as first-person, reflecting the figure's own life, memories and self-reflection as she dreams of her orchard.

Sean Whytock

***Go to the orchard* -**
Artwork by Nohana Sayama
Gansai watercolour on paper

My impression of the poem was that the poet is reminded of a specific person and their apples through simple, daily moments. I wanted to visualize this by portraying a quiet pause—someone looking out a window and thinking of another—before continuing with their day.

In February, I visited Otley and saw the actual orchard where the poem was written. I photographed the site and chose to paint those trees outside the windows of my accommodation at Otley, as I was drawn to the calm, cozy atmosphere of the space. While there is a single apple on the table, the trees themselves are bare. I felt this subtlety emphasizes that the piece is a private memory and a personal reminder of a fellow Leeds/Otley resident.

Nohana Sayama

BIOGRAPHIES

Sean Whytock (Composer)
Sean Whytock is an award-winning composer, arranger and pianist based in London, who is currently completing his Master's degree in Composition for Screen at the Royal College of Music.

Born and raised in the border city of Carlisle, Cumbria, Sean continues to write concert works for solo, chamber and orchestral settings, alongside film scoring. Recent projects have included *Scenes from Dante's Inferno* for voice/s, piano & electronics and *A Rose in Winter's Snow* for string orchestra.

Sean has been generously supported by the Henry Wood Accommodation Trust (2023-2025), Ian Evans Lombe Scholarship (2024) and Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship (2025).

Tim Boardman (Poet)
Tim Boardman is a poet from West Yorkshire who crafts lyrical, intimate pieces that illuminate ordinary life, blending reflection, memory, and gentle storytelling into moments of subtle emotional resonance.

A devoted family man, Tim balances his life between his roles as husband, father, and poet. His work celebrates these intersections — where care meets creativity, and where everyday life becomes poetry.

Nohana Sayama (Artist)
Nohana Sayama (b.2003, Osaka) is a Japanese artist based in London, a recent graduate of Camberwell College of Arts, Fine Art: Painting. Through her time at Camberwell, she developed her practice surrounding the medium of watercolour. Raised in Singapore, India and Japan, she paints to journal her past, to record her existence, to have nameless characters observe her in silence. With the unconventional use of Gansai watercolour, she attempts to express her incomplete social-cultural identity.

She recently won the Watercolour award at the CASS Art Prize 2025. She has also exhibited widely, such as World Art Dubai, Affordable Art Fair, Southwark Park Gallery, London Design Festival and more this year. This summer, she participated in her first residency with Culterim in Dahlewitz, Berlin.

WORKSHOP LEADERS

Martin Iddon (Composers' Convenor)

Martin Iddon is a composer and musicologist. His research concentrates on post-war music in West Germany and North America. His books *John Cage and David Tudor*, *John Cage and Peter Yates*, *New Music at Darmstadt*, the *Cambridge Companion to Serialism* and *Hauntology, Nostalgia, and New Music* are published by Cambridge University Press, while *John Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (with Philip Thomas) is published by Oxford University Press. His music appears on *pneuma*, *Sapindales*, *Naiads* (Another Timbre), and *Hesperides* (NMC), and is published by University of York Music Press. His tuba piece, *Lamapdes*, won the Ivor Novello Award for solo composition in 2021. He is Professor of Music and Aesthetics at the University of Leeds.

Hannah Stone (Poets' Convenor)

Hannah Stone has published a number of volumes of poetry, including collaborations with other poets, most recently *The Invisible Worm* (Indigo Dreams Publishing, 2023). She has an extensive portfolio of activities in the poetry community of Leeds, including as poet-theologian for Leeds Church Institute, editor of Dream Catcher literary journal, and enjoys ongoing collaborations with composer Matthew Oglesby. In 2023 her poetry was featured in the Guardian Poem of the Week column, and won the David Oluwale Memorial Writing Competition. She holds degrees in English (London), Theology (Leeds), and Creative Writing (Leeds Trinity).

Leeds Song is a politically neutral organisation. Views expressed in the works performed at the Leeds Song Festival or by the artists appearing at the Festival are not necessarily the views of the organisation, or anyone who works for the charity.
Programme details correct at the time of going to print. Leeds Song reserves the right to change artists, programmes and events if necessary.

Biographies

Leeds Song Young Artists

Naomi Boot (mezzo-soprano)

Mezzo-soprano Naomi Boot is in her final year of undergraduate studies at the Royal College of Music, where she is a Douglas and Hilda Simmonds Scholar under the tutelage of Ben Johnson. She is also generously supported by the Gillian Bardsley Trust. Born in Oxford and raised in Canada, she began her vocal training with Jennifer Tung, Artistic Director of Toronto City Opera.

She sings with the Upper Voices of Eton College's Lower Chapel Choir and has performed in masterclasses with Dame Ann Murray, Matthew Rose, David Parry, Tom Primrose, James Gilchrist and Markus Hadulla. This past summer she appeared with the Scherzo Ensemble in Longhope Opera's production of Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri* and was a Young Artist at the Southrepps Music Festival. She is also a recipient of the Folkestone on Song Luxon Amit Singing Bursary.

Most recently, Naomi was the soloist in the Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra and Chorus's performance of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's rarely performed *Meg Blane, A Rhapsody of the Sea*, under the baton of Sofi Jeannin.

Andrew Cowie (piano)

Andrew Cowie has performed at some of the world's most distinguished venues, including Buckingham Palace, the Duomo di Cremona and the Salzburger Dom. After completing an undergraduate degree in trombone at the Royal Academy of Music, he is now a postgraduate at the Royal College of Music, specialising in keyboard, historical performance and conducting. Recent highlights include the reopening of the King's Gallery; a double song recital début at the Royal Albert Hall with duo partner Mariana Rodrigues; appearances at the London Handel Festival; the London Bach Society Singer's Prize (on keyboard); and performances at the Japan Matsuri Festival and with the Aurora Orchestra at the Southbank Centre.

At home in most music written over the last 600 years, Andrew performs on various instruments, including piano, historical keyboards, trombone and sackbut. He has been a regular song accompanist alongside Richard Stokes, Florence Daguerre de Hureaux and Emily Kilpatrick, and has enjoyed working with and performing for artists such as Rachel Podger, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, James Baillieu, Christian Gerhaher, Laurence Cummings, James Gilchrist, Dame Emma Kirkby, Yvonne Kenny, Nick Mulroy and Elizabeth Kenny. Recent albums as an instrumental accompanist with the Girton College, Cambridge Choir have placed in the top ten of the UK and worldwide classical charts.

Andrew is a Parnassus Scholar, supported by the Charles Colt Scholarship, and a recipient of the Help Musicians Ian Fleming Award. His song project 'Chantefable' with Mariana Rodrigues blends improvised music, poetry and song into complete concert narratives. They are BREMF 2025–26 Emerging Artists.

His recent piano feature film score for *Away with Words* will be released in 2026.

George Herbert (piano)

George Herbert was born in Manchester in 2001. His first album as a collaborative pianist, Rodrigo Ruiz's *Venus and Adonis* with Grace Davidson, won the Spanish prize *Melómano de Oro* in January 2025. He studied German and Music at St John's College, Cambridge, where he served as an organ scholar. He is now studying for an MA in Ensemble Piano at the Royal Academy of Music with Professors Michael Dussek and James Baillieu, where he is a scholarship recipient.

He has recently collaborated with Carolyn Sampson, Susan Bullock and Manchester Camerata. He is a participant in the Wigmore Hall French Song Exchange and looks forward to upcoming recitals at Wigmore Hall, Hallwylska in Stockholm, Salle Cortot in Paris and Southwark Cathedral. His recent projects include work with composer David Roche on a Welsh language heavy metal project, and a collaboration with author Bernhard Malkmus on the literary musical project *Flight Paths*.

Alongside his pianistic work, George is also active as a freelance singer. His engagements with Tenebrae and Continuum have taken him across Europe and the UK. He is generously supported by the Choir Association of St John's College, Cambridge. A passionate environmentalist, he volunteers with the London Wildlife Trust.

Zheng Jiang (counter-tenor)

Zheng Jiang is a Chinese countertenor praised by *The Times* for the "chorister's purity" of his timbre, rapidly establishing himself as a compelling artist on both the operatic and concert stages.

In 2026 he appears as a Season Artist with The Mozartists, making his company début as a soloist in their Mozart Birthday Concert at Cadogan Hall. He has also been selected for the Samling Artist Programme and the Leeds Song Young Artist Programme. Later in the season he makes his role début as Sesto (*Giulio Cesare*) in The Grange Festival's production, and in the summer he makes his Salzburg Festival début performing Grimbald (*King Arthur Junior*) as cover, with scheduled performances. From September 2026 he will join the Royal College of Music International Opera Studio.

Recent highlights include his appearance at the 2025

Kathleen Ferrier Awards Final, where *The Times* praised his Schubert 'Nacht und Träume' as "ineffably beautiful" and his performance of 'Dawn, still darkness' from Jonathan Dove's *Flight* as "compelling and devastating." As a 2025 Ferrier Awards Finalist, his competition successes also include First Prize in the Adrian Clarke Vocal Award at the Grasmere Song Festival and Third Prize in the RCM Lies Askonas Competition. In 2024 he received the Nicholas Partridge Award for Outstanding Creativity at the inaugural Eastbourne International Singing Competition.

Operatic roles include Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and the Sandman (*Hänsel und Gretel*) at the Summer Opera Lyric Theater in Toronto, along with covers at the Royal College of Music including Piero della Francesca (*Seven Angels*). Other opera scenes include Ruggiero (*Alcina*), Rinaldo (*Rinaldo*) and Valentiniano (*Ezio*).

Zheng trained in Canada with Norma Burrowes and completed his Master's degree with distinction at the Royal College of Music, studying with Ben Johnson and supported by an RCM Study Award and the Josephine Baker Trust.

Honoka Komoda (piano)

Honoka Komoda is a pianist from Japan. She completed her studies at the Aichi University of the Arts, where she trained with Irina Chukovskaya, Professor of Piano, and is now continuing her musical development in Austria.

From October 2022 to March 2024, she studied in the Postgraduate Piano Programme at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna with Professors Wolfgang Watzinger and Stefan Vladar. Since March 2024, she has been enrolled in the Master's programme in Lied accompaniment with Professor Justus Zeyen.

She has won several awards at piano competitions in Japan and has performed in the Great Hall of the Vienna Musikverein. She has also appeared at the Schubertiade 'Junge SchubertStimmen' at Schubert Castle Atzenbrugg and in concerts organised by the Schubert Society.

In 2025 she was nominated for the Anny Felbermayer Förderpreis together with baritone Daniel Sauer. She was also nominated for scholarships from the AMICITIA Foundation and the Yamada Sadao Music Foundation. She has been selected for participation in the Basel LIEDAcademy 2026.

Honoka has received private lessons and masterclasses from distinguished artists including Dina Yoffe, Kevin Kenner, Elena Levit, Graham Scott, Noriko Ogawa, Matti Raekallio, Richard Stokes, Malcolm Martineau and Thomas Hampson.

On 19 February 2026, she will perform on the Hammerklavier in the Brahms Hall of the Vienna Musikverein as part of the concert series 'Aus der Schatzkammer' ('From the Treasury').

Alexander Karl Koschka (piano)

The Austrian pianist Alexander Karl Koschka received musical training from an early age and won multiple awards at the Prima la Musica Competition, including national level distinctions. He began his studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna in 2017 with Sibylla Joedicke, completing his bachelor's degree with distinction in 2022. He now studies with Matthias Trachsel for his master's degree and, since autumn 2025, has also specialised in Lied accompaniment with Justus Zeyen at the mdw.

Alexander has participated in masterclasses with Harald Ossberger, Mats Widlund and Marta Zabaleta, among others. His artistic interests encompass solo and chamber music as well as innovative concert formats and contemporary repertoire. In 2023 he took part in the world première of Georg Friedrich Haas's *11,000 Saiten* at the Wiener Konzerthaus. At the Munich Piano Podium 2024 he received several awards and subsequent invitations to perform throughout Germany.

As a Lied accompanist he forms a regular duo with soprano Martina Neubauer. Together, they won the Audience Prize at the final of the Sibelius Singing Lied Duo Competition in Finland (2025) and Third Prize at the International Copenhagen Lied Duo Competition. His playing is noted for its richness of colour, stylistic sensitivity and finely judged musicianship.

Alexander is increasingly in demand for projects that combine classical repertoire with contemporary influences. His collaborations highlight his versatility and his dedication to thoughtful programming, making him an exciting and expressive presence on today's musical scene.

Lisa-Marie Lebitschnig (soprano)

Soprano Lisa-Marie Lebitschnig was shaped early in life by her love of the arts, expression and creativity. Her passion for opera developed on the stage of her hometown theatre, the Stadttheater Klagenfurt. Joining the company at the age of twelve, she has already taken part in more than twenty opera productions.

Highlights from her eleven years in Klagenfurt include roles such as First Boy (*Die Zauberflöte*), Yniold (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) and Barbarina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), as well as numerous performances in the children's and extra choruses. These early experiences working alongside professional singers and conductors were formative in developing her acting, musicianship and artistic professionalism.

A childhood cancer survivor, Lisa-Marie is passionate about supporting charitable organisations. She organised her first benefit concert for Kärntner Kinderkrebshilfe at the age of sixteen, raising significant donations to support their mission in combating childhood cancer.

Since 2017 she has studied voice at the Kunstuniversität Graz with Antonius Sol. There she discovered her love for the subtle art of interpreting classical song through work with Josef Breinl and Julius Drake. In February 2023 she gave

her first recital at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna with Thomas Ebenstein and Sascha El Mouissi at the piano, followed by a solo recital in Padova organised by L'amici della Musica Padova. In summer 2023 she performed Despina (*Così fan tutte*) at Oper Lungau and later gave a recital for the Österreichische Richard Wagner Gesellschaft. In early 2024 she sang Pamina at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz and subsequently took part in a number of contemporary performances at Oper Graz.

She won three prizes at the 2025 competition Liedkunst im Schloss vor Husum and completed her Master's degree in the same year.

Wan-Yen Li (piano)

Wan-Yen Li was born in Taipei, Taiwan. She has earned a distinguished reputation as a soloist, artsong pianist, accompanist, teacher and individual coach. She has been invited to the Heidelberger Frühling Liedakademie, the LIEDBasel Academy and Carnegie Hall SongStudio. She has also been selected for the Young Artists Programme at the 2026 Leeds Song Festival and for Campus Lied et Mélodie at the Royaumont Foundation.

She has received important artistic inspiration through collaborations with Thomas Hampson and Susan Manoff, as well as masterclasses with James Baillieu, Patricia Petibon, Anne Le Bozec, Javier Arrebola, Bryan Wagorn and others.

Wan-Yen works as a piano accompanist with numerous choirs and holds a lectureship in several singing classes at the Conservatory for Music and Dance Cologne. From the 2025 season onwards she will serve as choir accompanist at Theater Aachen in Germany. She has performed in New York, Paris, London, Basel, Montepulciano, Tokyo, Taipei and at many venues throughout Germany.

Following her bachelor's degree in Taiwan, she completed three master's degrees in Germany: in Lied interpretation with Prof. Ulrich Eisenlohr, in contemporary piano music with Prof. PierreLaurent Aimard and in solo piano with Prof. Florian Hölscher. She earned her Konzertexamen degree in Lied Interpretation under Prof. Stefan Irmer.

Edward Lloyd (piano)

Described as "A highly poetic and expressive performer with strong musical instincts alongside beautiful tonal colouring creating a notable silence in the audience indicative of their expressive ability and communicative musicianship." (Pascal Nemirovski)

Edward made his concerto début with the Oxford Festival Orchestra in the Church of St Mary the Virgin in 2022. Subsequent performances have brought him to the Bridgewater Hall, Stoller Hall, Liszt Academy in Budapest and most recently the Liverpool Philharmonic.

Edward has been a prize winner in numerous international competitions including the Liszt Society International Piano Competition, Christopher Duke and Vienna International Competition as well as the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe Competition. He is also active in chamber music and has received the first prize in both the Dorothy Richardson and the Alexander Young prizes for vocal accompaniment.

Edward Lloyd studied at Chetham's School of Music and is currently at the Royal Northern College of Music under the tutelage of Prof. Graham Scott, where he is supported by the The LHR Charitable Foundation.

Edward is an artist in the Davison Young Musicians Foundation. Since 2024, Edward has been an awards advocate for the DYMF. Currently in 2025, Edward has been selected as a Drake Calleja Trust Scholar and is supported by the Craxton Memorial Trust.

Bruno Meichsner (baritone)

Bruno Meichsner was born in Berlin and discovered his passion for singing with the Berlin Boys' Choir. The lyric baritone completed his vocal studies in 2025 at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin under Prof. Stephan Rügamer.

He is a multiple prizewinner at the 7th Internationale Haydn Gesangswettbewerb für klassisches Lied und Arie. In addition to First Prize, the young baritone won the Mozarthaus Vienna Prize and the Audience Prize.

As a concert singer, he performs major roles across a wide variety of oratorios and Masses in venues such as the Philharmonie, the Konzerthaus Berlin and the Pierre Boulez Saal. He has appeared with renowned orchestras including the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the Kammersymphonie Berlin.

During his studies, Bruno Meichsner appeared regularly in musictheatre productions at the HfM Hanns Eisler. These included Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Pasquino (*Il mondo della luna*), and Demetrius (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

He has received important artistic impulses through collaboration with Thomas Hampson, Wolfram Rieger and Martin Bruns, and has furthered his training in numerous masterclasses with KS Robert Holl, KS Birgid Steinberger, Susan Manoff and Malcolm Martineau.

He was a scholarship holder at the Lied Academy of the Heidelberger Frühling for the 2023–24 season.

Martina Neubauer (soprano)

The Viennese soprano Martina Neubauer possesses a broad repertoire spanning opera, operetta, concert and Lied. She has appeared as Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Countess Zedlau (*Wiener Blut*), Eva the Diva (*Von 0 bis Oper*), the Queen (*Richard III.*, Musik Theater an der Wien), and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*, Vienna Opera Summer Belvedere).

In 2022 she won the LIONS Music Prize, the Gabriele Sima Scholarship and the Musica Juventutis Competition of the Wiener Konzerthaus. Further recognition followed in 2024

when she reached the finals of both the Otto Edelmann Singing Competition and the Neue Stimmen Competition and received Second Prize and the Audience Prize at the Hans Staud Music Prize.

Alongside her vocal studies in Vienna, Martina attended the operetta course taught by Wolfgang Dosch and received significant artistic impulses from masterclasses with Elīna Garanča, Linda Watson, Ian Bostridge and Adrian Eröd.

In addition to her operatic work, she is deeply committed to the concert repertoire and has appeared as a soloist at both the Vienna Musikverein and the Vienna Konzerthaus. Her passion for Lied is central to her artistic identity; together with pianist Alexander Koschka, she forms a permanent duo that performs regularly in concert and on the competition stage. In 2025 the duo won the Audience Prize at the Sibelius Singing Lied Duo Competition in Finland and Third Prize at the International Copenhagen Lied Duo Competition.

Martina is equally active in exploring new sonic and artistic directions. She is the founder of the Aerelis Quintet, an ensemble consisting of soprano and four saxophonists, which combines classical tradition with contemporary innovation and reimagines well-known works through striking new colours and textures.

Mariana Rodrigues (soprano)

Described as "singing with a crystalline beauty that would tame any savage beast" (*The Times*), Portuguese soprano Mariana Rodrigues has recently completed her MA with Distinction at the Royal Academy of Music in London under Marie Vassiliou, Raymond Connell, James Baillieu, Joseph Middleton and Philip Sunderland, supported by a full scholarship. She was awarded a DipRAM for her outstanding final recital.

Mariana has appeared as a soloist for Academy Song Circle, Academy Voices, Resounding Shores and the Bach in Leipzig series, working with artists including Masaaki Suzuki, Philippe Herreweghe, Rachel Podger, John Butt, Peter Whelan, Dame Jane Glover, Elizabeth Kenny, Yvonne Kenny, Margaret Faultless and Nicholas Mulroy.

She is the winner of the Isabel Jay Memorial Prize, the Edna Bralesford Vocal Prize, the Regency Award and the Flora Nielsen Prize. Mariana has also participated in masterclasses with Iestyn Davies, Dame Felicity Lott, Joanne Lunn, Christian Gerhaher, Lucy Crowe, Malcolm Martineau and Hartmut Höll.

Recent engagements include a double recital début at the Royal Albert Hall and the live première of Billy Cowie's song cycle with her duo, Chantefable; performances in the Cripta de la Sagrada Familia with Bachcelona; and appearances at the Palau de la Música Catalana with Fundación Salvat. She has also performed Sir John Clerk's soprano solo cantata with the Dunedin Consort.

Alongside Carolyn Sampson, Mariana will create and première a new two-woman opera with the Dunedin Consort, Mahogany Opera and Hera as part of the project *In the Belly of the Beast*. Her recent festival appearances include Bachcelona, Bloomsbury, Baroquestock, Islington, Surrey Bach and Vilalte in the south of France.

Young Artist Programmes for the 2025–26 season include Vache Baroque James Bowman Young Artist, Bachcelona Akademie, Concertist Fellow with the Oxford Bach Soloists, BREMF Emerging Artist with Chantefable and Next Generation Artist with Sestina Music.

Mariana is the soprano recipient of the 2026 Salvat Grant for Baroque Music.

Carleigh Ross (soprano)

Carleigh Ross is a Canadian American soprano pursuing a master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music, where she studies with Catherine Wyn Rogers, Raymond Connell and Joseph Middleton. Her studies are generously supported by Help Musicians.

Recent engagements include Zdenka (*Arabella*) and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) in Royal Academy Opera scenes; performing as soloist in Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* for the Academy's celebratory Ravel concert; appearances at London's Tête à Tête Festival; and participation in the Glyndebourne Festival's Opera Lab led by Jessica Walker and Stephen Langridge. She is a prize-winner in several vocal competitions, including First Prize in the Major Van Someren-Godfrey Prize and Second Prize in both the Isabel Jay Memorial Prize and the Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize.

Alongside her work as a Young Artist at Leeds Song, Carleigh's upcoming engagements include Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) in Royal Academy Opera scenes, covering the Female Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) with the Royal Academy Opera Studio, and projects at the National Institute for Dramatic Art in Brussels exploring the integration of wax and voice through George Crumb's *Apparition*.

Carleigh holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of British Columbia, where her roles included Hannah (*Die Passagierin*, Canadian première), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), La Marchesa Melibea (*Il viaggio a Reims*) and Zweite Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*), as well as female soloist in Duruflé's Requiem with the UBC Symphony Orchestra. She has toured as a soloist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, sung in masterclasses with Susan Bullock, Sondra Radvanovsky, Judith Forst and Katherine Ciesinski, and coproduced a multidisciplinary reimagining of Mahler's *RückertLieder* with WhatLab Studios as part of their Deep End Residency Programme.

Daniel Sauer (baritone)

Daniel Sauer was born in 1999 in Munich and received his first vocal training at the age of seven with the Tölzer Knabenchor. At eleven, he appeared as one of the Three Boys in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, including performances at the Bremen State Theatre.

He began his vocal studies in 2016 — initially as a precollege student — with Prof. Dominik Wortig at the Leopold Mozart College of Music at the University of Augsburg. During his bachelor's studies he discovered his passion for the piano, which has since become an important artistic companion. He completed his bachelor's degree in Augsburg in July 2023.

Masterclasses and coachings with artists such as Thomas Hampson, Philippe Jaroussky and Mariette Witteveen have further shaped his musical development. Since 2024 he has been pursuing a master's degree in 'Lied—Oratorio—Concert' at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna under Prof. Florian Boesch and Prof. Karlheinz Hanser. In Vienna he has developed a strong affinity for the art song and its close relationship with poetry — a focus reflected in numerous performances in and around the city. In 2025 he gave his first solo Lieder recital at Castello Miramare in Trieste, together with his close friend and pianist Steve Roy.

With equal curiosity and dedication, Daniel continues to explore the oratorio and opera repertoire. His artistic experience includes appearances as the baritone soloist in Gabriel Fauré's Requiem, as well as operatic roles such as Pelléas (*Impressions de Pelléas* by Marius Constant, after Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*).

Daniel Sauer is currently a scholarship holder of the Anny Felbermayer Fund, awarded to him and pianist Honoka Komoda for their joint work as a Lied duo.

Klara Solén (mezzo-soprano)

Klara Solén is a Swedish mezzo-soprano with a passion for storytelling and expressive performance. She is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in Classical Singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London and recently made her UK operatic début in the title role of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* with Hampstead Garden Opera.

Before moving to the UK, Klara trained at Kapellsberg's Opera Studio in Sweden, where she performed roles including Carmen (*Carmen*) and Oberon (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) at the Swedish Northern Opera House, Norrlandsoperan. She has also appeared with Moderna Operan in *Amour Fou* (2025) and with Skånska Operan in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2024).

An active concert and recital artist, Klara's recent solo repertoire includes Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's Requiem, Vivaldi's Stabat Mater and Bach's *St John Passion*. At the Royal Academy of Music, she has appeared in the Academy Voices concert series and in *An Evening with Rachel Podger and the Royal Academy of Music* at St George's, Hanover Square. She is also a member of the Royal Academy Song Circle.

Klara has a particular affinity for Nordic song and is committed to sharing this repertoire with new audiences. She has participated in masterclasses and coaching sessions with Aigul Akhmetshina, Susan Bullock, Julius Drake, Jennifer Larmore, Anna Larsson and Matthew Rose.

Viviana Țaga-Radu (piano)

Viviana-Maria Țaga-Radu began her piano studies at the age of six at the Octav Băncila National College of Art in Iași, Romania. Since then, she has taken part in more than fifty national and international piano competitions, as well as numerous chamber music festivals and concerts. From 2020 to 2022, she was a member of the youth orchestra in her hometown, performing a wide range of repertoire. Her passion for understanding music in depth was encouraged from an early age, leading her to participate in several music symposiums where she wrote and presented her own articles.

She is currently in her fourth year as an undergraduate at the Royal College of Music under the tutelage of Professor Edna Stern. Viviana has also developed an increasingly strong interest in the world of art song, collaborating with a growing number of singers. Most recently, she was awarded the Pianist Prize in the 2025 Brooks Van Der Pump English Song Competition.

Kelsey Thomas (soprano)

Kelsey Thomas is a British soprano studying at the Royal Northern College of Music. She is the current award holder of the Sybil Tutton Opera Award from Help Musicians UK and is also supported by the Riga Heesom Scholarship Award and the Richard Newitt Fund from the RNCM.

On the concert stage, Kelsey has performed at numerous UK venues, including the Buxton Pavilion Arts Centre, Crosby Hall and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, where she made her professional début opening the Philharmonic's 2025—26 lunchtime concert series alongside her duo partner, Edward Lloyd (piano). She has also appeared at several opera galas, including Grimsby Town Hall alongside Henry Waddington and Victoria Simmonds, where she was introduced as an "exciting, early career singer" (Grimsby Concert Society).

As an oratorio and chamber soloist, Kelsey has performed major soprano solos including VillaLobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras* with cellists of the Merseyside Youth Orchestra, and Handel's Messiah with the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. She returns as soprano soloist in *Messiah* in March 2026 with the Oldham Symphony Orchestra, and appears as guest soprano soloist in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Liverpool Cathedral in May.

Since 2024, Kelsey has been a member of the RNCM Songsters, a select ensemble of advanced singers and pianists at the conservatoire. Through this platform, she has performed widely, presenting a diverse range of art-song repertoire across multiple UK venues.

Recent operatic highlights include Berenice (*L'occasione fa il ladro*, RNCM Opera Scenes 2026), Sandrina (*La finta giardiniera*, RNCM Opera Scenes 2025), Maria Bertram (*Mansfield Park*, RNCM Opera Scenes 2024) and Colombina (*Le donne curiose*, RNCM Opera Scenes 2024). She has also performed with the RNCM Opera Chorus in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (2022) and Rimsky Korsakov's *Snegurochka* (2023).

Kelsey has participated in masterclasses with Rebecca Evans, Joseph Middleton, Soraya Mafi, Elizabeth Llewellyn, David Owen Norris and Roger Vignoles.

Curtis Vetter (piano)

Curtis Vetter is a British German collaborative pianist and répétiteur based in London. Specialising in vocal accompaniment and chamber music, he is an acclaimed recitalist who performs across the UK. Curtis is a Young Artist at Leeds Song and was the recipient of the Sam Hutchings Pianist Prize at the Oxenfoord International Summer School, where he worked with Malcolm Martineau.

He has performed in masterclasses with renowned artists including Susan Bullock, Marie McLaughlin and Lucy Crowe, and his répétiteur work includes engagements with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Barber Opera on a variety of productions.

Curtis is currently undertaking postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music with James Baillieu and Joseph Middleton, where he is supported by the Sir Curtis Price Scholarship. His studies are additionally funded by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. He holds a First Class Honours degree in Music from the University of Birmingham.

Amelie Warner (piano)

Amelie Warner was born in Augsburg, Germany, in 1994. She completed her bachelor's degree in artistic pedagogical piano at the University of Music Würzburg with Prof. Martin Dombrowski. During this time she gained valuable experience in song interpretation through lessons with Prof. Gerold Huber and Prof. Alexander Fleischer. In October 2025 she completed her master's degree in piano-vocal accompaniment with distinction at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, where she studied with Prof. Julius Drake, Prof. Joseph Breinl and Prof. Hedayet Djeddikar.

Amelie Warner's song repertoire encompasses a wide range of classical and romantic works by numerous composers, including many lesser known figures such as Isabelle Aboulker, Maria Bach, Jean Patrick Besingrand, Henriette Bosmans, Rebecca Clarke, Tom Cipullo, Anna Cramer, Violeta Dinescu, Manuela Kerer, Emilie Mayer, Lise Maria Mayer, Dora Pejačević, Wolfgang Rihm, Steffen Schleiermacher, Ruth Schönthal, Ethel Smyth, Karol Szymanowski, Viktor Ullmann and many others.

She has participated in numerous masterclasses and received formative musical inspiration from artists including Anne Le Bozec, Pauliina Tukiainen, Roger Vignoles, Erika Switzer, Joseph Middleton, Eleonora Pertz, JanPhilip Schulze, Gottfried Hefele, Elly Ameling, Thomas Quasthoff, Hartmut Höll, Anna Lucia Richter, Marlis Petersen, Sir Thomas Allen, Julia Kleiter, Michael McMahon, Hans Eijsackers, Christianne Stotijn, Jard van Nes, Werner Güra, Robert Holl, Michael Schade, Emily Hehl and others.

Amelie's artistic work has received numerous awards. Together with her duo partners Nina Schumertl and Lisa-Marie Lebitschnig she is a prizewinner at the International Student LiedDuo Competition 2024 in Groningen, the Udo Reinemann International Masterclass 2023–24, the International Chamber Music Competition 'Seghizzi', Liedkunst im Schloss vor Husum 2025 and the 58th International Vocal Competition 2025.

Yihan Zhao (piano)

Yihan Zhao is a postgraduate student at the Royal College of Music in London, where he is studying piano with Jianing Kong and Dmitri Alexeev, and collaborative piano with Richard Uttley and Simon Lepper. He was generously supported by the Evelyn Tarrant Scholarship and the Eileen Rowe Musical Trust during his undergraduate studies, in which he was awarded the Chappell Medal as First Prize winner in the Chappell Medal Piano Competition 2022.

His recent début at Wigmore Hall in the 70th Kathleen Ferrier Award was highly commended, and his performance with countertenor Zheng Jiang received one of the most enthusiastic responses from the audience.

As a recent harpsichordist, Yihan has already achieved success as Second Prize winner at the Prix Annelie de Man, the international harpsichord competition in the Netherlands, in 2023. His involvement in the concert series *Abolition Song and Its Legacies* at the Handel Hendrix House explores, transmits and reinterprets the lost voices of historical composers and writers, particularly those who were Black or female.

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