



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
Saturday 18 April

(Pre-concert Talk at 6pm THE ROOFTOP BAR, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE)

Festival Closing Recital at 7pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Joseph Middleton'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

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 <i>Nelson Mass</i>	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: <i>Dunwich</i> : 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

Saturday 18 April 2026, 6pm
THE ROOFTOP BAR, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Pre-concert Talk

with **Dr George Kennaway**

Cellist, musicologist and visiting Research Fellow at Huddersfield and Leeds Universities, Dr George Kennaway gives one of his popular pre-concert talks in advance of the Festival's closing recital. As a longstanding Leeds Song Trustee, George is well-placed to introduce this final recital of the week, dedicated to Leeds Song Chair, Kathleen Evans BEM.



Saturday 18 April 2026, 7pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Festival Closing Recital

'Kathleen's Song Book'

Dame Sarah Connolly mezzo-soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

Rachel Munro soprano
Jia Ning Ng piano

This performance by the winners of the Northern Aldborough Festival's New Voices Singing Competition 2025 is generously supported by the Yorkshire Music Future Fund.



To close the 2026 Festival, we welcome Leeds Song Patron and the UK's foremost mezzo-soprano, Dame Sarah Connolly along with Festival Director Joseph Middleton to give a very special final recital, and one which is dedicated to Kathleen Evans BEM, current Chair and former Festival Administrator. Kathleen retires from her position as Chair this year, and in recognition of all the time, dedication and passion she has given to the organisation over many years, this programme is made up of her favourite songs and poems: music that celebrates, inspires, consoles and uplifts.

Rachel Munro soprano
Jia Ning Ng piano

Benjamin Britten
Let the florid music praise
(*On This Island*)

George Crumb
3 *Early Songs*
Night
Let It Be Forgotten
Wind Elegy

Ernesto Lecuona
Maria La O (*Romanza de María La O*)

Dame Sarah Connolly soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

Franz Schubert
Ganymed
Die junge Nonne
An die Musik

Robert Schumann
Widmung (*Myrthen*)

Clara Schumann
Liebst du um Schönheit
(*Zwölf Gedichte aus 'Liebesfrühling'*)

Johannes Brahms
Von waldbekränzter Höhe
Unbewegte laue Luft
Wie Melodien
Verzagen
Von ewiger Liebe

INTERVAL

David Matthews
Three *Hopkins Sonnets* (*World Première*)
The Windhover
The Candle Indoors
As Kingfishers Catch Fire

Henri Duparc
Extase
L'invitation au voyage
Chanson triste

Frank Bridge
Come to Me in my Dreams

Ernest John Moeran
Twilight

Ivor Bertie Gurney
Thou didst delight my eyes
Sleep (*Five Elizabethan Songs*)

Benjamin Britten
Sephastia's Lullaby
(*A Charm of Lullabies*)

Gustav Mahler
Urlicht (*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*)
Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen
(*Rückert-Lieder*)

Texts and Translations

If you are using a printed copy of this programme, please turn the pages quietly to avoid disturbing the performers and other audience members

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

from *On this Island*

Let the florid music praise

W. H. Auden (1907-1973)

For copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce the text of this song.

George Crumb (1929-2022)

Three Early Songs

Night

How beautiful is night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
Breaks the serene of heaven:
In full-orbed glory yonder Moon divine
Rolls through the dark-blue depths.
Beneath her steady ray
The desert-circle spreads,
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
How beautiful is night!
Composition:

Robert Southey (1774-1843)

Let it be forgotten

Let it be forgotten as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold.
Let it be forgotten forever and ever.
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten,
Long and long ago.
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed foot-fall
In a long forgotten snow.

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

Wind Elegy

Only the wind knows he is gone,
Only the wind grieves,
The sun shines, the fields are sown,
Sparrows mate in the eaves;

But I heard the wind in the pines he planted
And the hemlocks overhead,
"His acres wake, for the year turns,
But he is asleep," it said.

Sara Teasdale

Ernesto Lecuona (1896-1963)

from *Romanza de María La O*

Maria La O

Mulata infeliz tu vida acabó
De risa y guaracha se ha roto el bongó
Que oías ayer temblando de amor
Y con ilusión junto a un hombre cruel

Su amor ya se fue de mi corazón
Que hoy ya la aborrece porque mi pasión
Que hirió su traición yan tan solo es
Sed de verlo al fin tendido a mis pies

María la O ya no más cantar
María la O hora es de llorar
Y de recordar el tiempo feliz
De tus besos, que tan fugaz ya voló

María la O todo se acabó
Tu amor ya se fue de tu corazón
Y jamás él volverá
María la O sueña en mori

Gustavo Sánchez Galarraga (1893-1934)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Ganymed

Wie im Morgenglanze
Du rings mich anglühst,
Frühling, Geliebter!
Mit tausendfacher Liebeswonne
Sich an mein Herze drängt
Deiner ewigen Wärme
Heilig Gefühl,
Unendliche Schöne!
Daß ich dich fassen möcht'
In diesen Arm!

...

Sad mulatto girl, your life is over,
So much laughter and joy broke the drum
That you listened to yesterday, trembling with love
And hope, alongside a cruel man.

His love is gone now from my heart
Which today hates him, because my passion,
Wounded by his treason is now so alone,
Wanting only to see him, finally at my feet.

Maria la O, you sing no more.
Maria la O, now is the time to weep
And to remember the happy times
Of your kisses, which have now vanished..

Maria la O, all is finished,
Maria la O, your love is now gone
And he will never come back...
Maria la O dreams of dying...

Ganymede

How in the radiance of morning
You glow around me,
Spring! My lover!
With love's thousand-fold bliss
The blessed feeling of
Your eternal warmth
Pierces my heart,
Oh infinite beauty!
If only I could clasp
You in my arms!

...

Ach, an deinem Busen
Lieg' ich und schmachte,
Und deine Blumen, dein Gras
Drängen sich an mein Herz.
Du kühlst den brennenden
Durst meines Busens,
Lieblicher Morgenwind!
Ruft drein die Nachtigall
Liebend nach mir aus dem Nebeltal.
Ich komm', ich komme!
Ach, wohin? Wohin?

Hinauf! Strebt's hinauf!
Es schweben die Wolken
Abwärts, die Wolken
Neigen sich der sehnenden Liebe.
Mir! Mir!
In eurem Schosse
Aufwärts!
Umfangend umfassen!
Aufwärts an deinen Busen,
Allliebender Vater!

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Die junge Nonne

Wie braust durch die Wipfel der heulende Sturm!
Es klirren die Balken, es zittert das Haus!
Es rollet der Donner, es leuchtet der Blitz,
Und finster die Nacht, wie das Grab!

So tobt' es auch jüngst noch in mir!
Es brauste das Leben, wie jetzo der Sturm,
Es bebten die Glieder, wie jetzo das Haus,
Es flammte die Liebe, wie jetzo der Blitz,

Und finster die Brust, wie das Grab.
Nun tobe, du wilder, gewalt'ger Sturm,
Im Herzen ist Friede, im Herzen ist Ruh,
Des Bräutigams harret die liebende Braut,

Gereinigt in prüfender Glut,
Der ewigen Liebe getraut.
Ich harre, mein Heiland, mit sehndem Blick!
Komm, himmlischer Bräutigam, hole die Braut,

Erlöse die Seele von irdischer Haft.
Horch, friedlich ertönet das Glöcklein vom Turm!
Es lockt mich das süsse Getön
Allmächtig zu ewigen Höh'n. Alleluia!

Jakob Nicolaus von Craigher de Jachelutta (1797-1855)

Ah, at your breast
I lie and languish,
And your flowers and your grass
Press against my heart.
You cool the burning
Thirst of my breast,
Sweet wind of the morning!
The nightingale calls
Tenderly to me out of the misty valley.
I'm coming, I'm coming!
But where to? where to?

Upwards, strive upwards!
The clouds drift
Down, the clouds
Give way to my yearning love.
To me! To me!
Enveloped by you
Upwards!
Embracing, embraced!
Upwards into your bosom,
All-loving Father!

The young nun

How the wild storm roars through the treetops!
The rafters clatter, the house shudders!
The thunder roars, the lightning flashes,
And the night is as dark as the grave.

And so, as the storm rages,
Not long ago a storm raged within me
My limbs trembled like the house now,
Love flamed like the lightning now,

And my heart was as dark as the grave.
So rage on, you wild, powerful storm,
In my heart is peace, in my heart is calm,
The loving bride awaits her bridegroom

Purified in the testing flames,
Wedded to eternal love.
I wait, my Saviour, with a longing gaze!
Come, heavenly bridegroom, claim your bride,

Release her soul from earthly ties.
Listen, the bells ring peacefully from the tower!
I am drawn by the sweet sound,
So powerfully to eternal heights. Alleluia!

An die Musik

Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden,
Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt,
Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden,
Hast mich in eine bessre Welt entrückt!

Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf entfloßen,
Ein süßer, heiliger Akkord von dir
Den Himmel besser Zeiten mir erschlossen,
Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!

Franz von Schober (1796-1882)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

from *Myrthen*

Widmung

Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,
Du meine Wonn', o du mein Schmerz,
Du meine Welt, in der ich lebe,
Mein Himmel du, darin ich schwebe,
O du mein Grab, in das hinab
Ich ewig meinen Kummer gab!
Du bist die Ruh, du bist der Frieden,
Du bist der Himmel, mir beschieden.
Daß du mich liebst, macht mich mir wert,
Dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt,
Du hebst mich liebend über mich,
Mein guter Geist, mein beßres Ich!

Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866)

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

from *Zwölf Gedichte aus 'Liebesfrühling'*

Liebst du um Schönheit

Liebst du um Schönheit,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne,
Sie trägt ein gold'nes Haar!

Liebst du um Jugend,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe den Frühling,
Der jung ist jedes Jahr!

Liebst du um Schätze,
O nicht mich liebe.
Liebe die Meerfrau,
Sie hat viel Perlen klar.

...

To Music

Beloved art, in how many a bleak hour,
When I am caught in life's wild tumult
Have you kindled my heart to the warmth of love,
And taken me away to a better world!

Often a sigh, escaping from your harp,
A sweet, celestial chord from you
Has opened up for me a heaven of better times.
Beloved art, for this I thank you!

Dedication

Oh you who are my soul and my heart,
My rapture and my pain,
The world in which I live,
The heaven in which I float,
You my grave, into which
I put all my sorrows!
You are my rest, you are my peace,
You are the heaven that has been vouchsafed to me.
You love gives me my worth,
Your gaze has opened my eyes to myself,
Your love lifts me up to more than I am,
My good spirit, my better self.

If you love for beauty

If you love for beauty,
Oh, do not love me!
Love the sun,
She has golden tresses!

If you love for youth,
Oh, do not love me!
Love the Spring;
Which is young every year!

If you love for treasure,
Oh, do not love me!
Love the mermaid,
She has many beautiful pearls!

...

Liebst du um Liebe,
O ja, mich liebe!
Liebe mich immer,
Dich lieb' ich immerdar.

Friedrich Rückert

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Von waldbekränzter Höhe

Von waldbekränzter Höhe
Werf ich den heißen Blick
Der liebefeuchten Sehe
Zur Flur, die dich umgrünt, zurück.

Ich senk ihn auf die Quelle,
Vermöcht ich, ach, mit ihr
Zu fließen eine Welle,
Zurück, o Freund, zu dir, zu dir!

Ich richt' ihn auf die Züge
Der Wolken über mir,
Ach, flög' ich ihre Flüge,
Zurück, o Freund, zu dir, zu dir!

Wie wollt ich dich umstricken,
Mein Heil und meine Pein,
Mit Lippen und mit Blicken,
Mit Busen, Herz und Seele dein!

Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875)

Unbewegte laue Luft

Unbewegte laue Luft,
Tiefe Ruhe der Natur,
Durch die stille Gartennacht
Plätschert die Fontäne nur,
Aber im Gemüte schwillt
Heißere Begierde mir,
Aber in der Ader quillt
Leben und verlangt nach Leben.

Sollten nicht auch deine Brust
Sehnlichere Wünsche heben?
Sollte meiner Seele Ruf
Nicht die deine tief durchbeben?
Leise mit dem Ätherfuß
Säume nicht daher zu schweben!
Komm, o komm, damit wir uns
Himmlische Genüge geben!

Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875)

If you love for love,
Oh yes, then love me!
Love me forever,
For I will love you forever.

From heights covered in forests

From heights covered in forests
I turn the passionate gaze
Of my tear-drenched eyes
To the green meadows where you are.

I look down at the stream,
Oh if only I could
Flow with it as a wave
Back, my friend, to you, to you!

I look up at the drifting
Clouds above me,
Oh if only I could fly with them
Back, my friend, to you, to you!

How I would embrace you,
My salvation and my pain.
With my lips and glances,
My bosom, heart and soul, all yours!

Still mild air

Still, mild air,
Nature deep at rest,
In the still night of the garden
You can hear only the fountain splashing,
But in my soul stir
Ardent longings,
In my veins surge
Life and longing for life.

Shouldn't your breast too
Be stirred by such passionate desires?
Shouldn't the cry of my soul
Resound deeply in yours?
Gently on ethereal feet
Don't delay, glide to me!
Come, oh come, so that we
Can give each other heavenly satisfaction.

Wie Melodien

Wie Melodien zieht es
Mir leise durch den Sinn,
Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht es
Und schwebt wie Duft dahin.

Doch kommt das Wort und faßt es
Und führt es vor das Aug',
Wie Nebelgrau erblaßt es
Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

Und dennoch ruht im Reime
Verborgen wohl ein Duft,
Den mild aus stillem Keime
Ein feuchtes Auge ruft.

Klaus Groth (1819-1899)

Verzagen

Ich sitz' am Strande der rauschenden See
Und suche dort nach Ruh',
Ich schaue dem Treiben der Wogen
Mit dumpfer Ergebung zu.

Die Wogen rauschen zum Strande hin,
Sie schäumen und vergehn,
Die Wolken, die Winde darüber,
Die kommen und verwehn.

Du ungestümes Herz sei still
Und gib dich doch zur Ruh',
Du sollst mit Winden und Wogen
Dich trösten, - was weinst du?

Karl von Lemcke (1831-1913)

Von ewiger Liebe

Dunkel, wie dunkel in Wald und in Feld!
Abend schon ist es, nun schweiget die Welt.
Nirgend noch Licht und nirgend noch Rauch,
Ja, und die Lerche sie schweiget nun auch.

Kommt aus dem Dorfe der Bursche heraus,
Gibt das Geleit der Geliebten nach Haus,
Führt sie am Weidengebüsche vorbei,
Redet so viel und so mancherlei:
...

Like melodies

Thoughts steal through my mind
Like gentle melodies,
Blossom like Spring flowers,
And drift away like a sweet fragrance.

But when come words and grasp them
And bring them before my eyes,
They turn pale grey like a mist,
And disappear like breath.

And yet surely in rhyme,
Though hidden, lies a fragrance,
Called gently by a moist eye
From a silent seed.

Despondency

I sit on the shore of the rushing sea
And try to find peace there,
I watch the pounding waves
With gloomy resignation.

The waves rush to the shore,
They foam and disappear;
The clouds and the winds above,
They come and drift away.

Be still, impetuous heart,
And calm yourself,
Be comforted by the winds and waves.
Why do you weep?

Eternal love

Dark, how dark it is in the wood and the fields!
It's already evening, and the world falls silent.
Not a light anywhere, not a wisp of smoke,
And now even the lark falls silent.

The boy comes out of the village,
To escort his beloved home.
He leads her past the willow trees,
Chatting freely about so many things.
...

„Leidest du Schmach und betrübtest du dich,
Leidest du Schmach von andern um mich,
Werde die Liebe getrennt so geschwind,
Schnell wie wir früher vereinigt sind.
Scheide mit Regen und scheide mit Wind,
Schnell wie wir früher vereinigt sind.“

“If you suffer any shame which grieves you,
Any insults from others about me,
Then our love will be ended quickly,
As quickly as we originally got together.
It shall go with the wind and the rain,
As quickly as we originally got together.

Spricht das Mägdelein, Mägdelein spricht:
„Unsere Liebe sie trennet sich nicht!
Fest ist der Stahl und das Eisen gar sehr,
Unsere Liebe ist fester noch mehr.

Then the maiden says,
“Our love will not be ended!
Steel and iron may be very strong,
But our love is even stronger!

Eisen und Stahl, man schmiedet sie um,
Unsere Liebe, wer wandelt sie um?
Eisen und Stahl, sie können zergehn,
Unsere Liebe muß ewig bestehn!“

Steel and iron can be recast,
But who is going to change our love?
Steel and iron can rust away,
But our love must last for ever!”

INTERVAL

David Matthews (b. 1943) *Three Hopkins Sonnets*

The Windhover

To Christ Our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, — the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

The Candle Indoors

Some candle clear burns somewhere I come by.
I muse at how its being puts blissful back
With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black,
Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.
By that window what task what fingers ply,
I plod wondering, a-wanting, just for lack
Of answer the eagerer a-wanting Jessy or Jack
There God to aggrándise, God to glorify.—

...

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire
Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? Are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

As Kingfishers Catch Fire

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó* is me: for that I came.

I say *móre*: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: *thát* keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Chríst — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

Extase

Sur un lys pâle mon coeur dort
D'un sommeil doux comme la mort
Mort exquise, mort parfumée
Du souffle de la bien aimée
Sur ton sein pâle mon coeur dort
D'un sommeil doux comme la mort

Henri Cazalis (1840-1909)

L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble!
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.
Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

...

Ecstasy

On your pale breast my heart is sleeping
A sleep as sweet as death
Exquisite death, death perfumed
By the breath of the beloved
On your pale breast my heart is sleeping
A sleep as sweet as death

Invitation to a Voyage

My child, my sister,
Think how sweet it would be
To go and live together there.
To love at leisure,
To love and die
In a country that is the image of you!
It's misty suns
And hazy skies
For me have the same mysterious charms
As your scheming eyes,
Shining through their tears.
There, there is nothing but harmony and beauty,
Comfort, tranquillity and bliss.

...

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)

Chanson triste

Dans ton coeur dort un clair de lune,
Un doux clair de lune d'été,
Et pour fuir la vie importune,
Je me noierai dans ta clarté.

J'oublierai les douleurs passées,
Mon amour, quand tu berceras
Mon triste coeur et mes pensées
Dans le calme aimant de tes bras.

Tu prendras ma tête malade,
Oh! quelquefois, sur tes genoux,
Et lui diras une ballade
Qui semblera parler de nous;

Et dans tes yeux pleins de tristesse,
Dans tes yeux alors je boirai
Tant de baisers et de tendresse
Que peut-être je guérirai.

Henri Cazalis (1840-1909)

Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Come to me in my dreams

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to all the rest as me.

...

Look, there on the canals
Sleep the ships
Waiting to go adventuring.
It is to assuage
Your merest whim
That they come from the ends of the world.
The setting suns
Clothe the meadows,
The canals, the whole town,
In hyacinth and gold;
The world goes to sleep
Bathed in a warm light.

There, there is nothing but order and beauty,
Comfort, tranquillity and bliss.

Sorrowful song

Moonlight slumbers in your heart,
A gentle Summer moonlight,
And to escape the cares of life
I shall drown myself in your light.

I shall forget past sorrows,
My love, when you cradle
My sad heart and my thoughts
In the loving calm of your arms.

You will rest my poor head,
Ah! sometimes on your lap,
And sing to it a song
That will seem to speak of us;

And from your eyes full of sorrow,
From your eyes I shall then drink
So many kisses and so much love
That perhaps I shall be healed.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth;
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say: My love! why suff'rest thou?

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950)

Twilight

Twilight it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks cry and call.
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all,
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear long ago in the past,
Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that death cannot last ;
Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has defiled.
Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a child.

John Masefield (1878-1967)

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)

Thou didst delight my eyes

Thou didst delight my eyes:
Yet who am I? nor first
Nor last nor best, that durst
Once dream of thee for prize;
Nor this the only time
Thou shalt set love to rhyme.

Thou didst delight my ear:
Ah! little praise; thy voice
Makes other hearts rejoice,
Makes all ears glad that hear;
And short my joy: but yet,
O song, do not forget.

For what wert thou to me?
How shall I say? The moon,
That poured her midnight noon
Upon his wrecking sea;—
A sail, that for a day
Has cheered the castaway.

Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

from **Five Elizabethan Songs**

Sleep

Come, sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving
Lock me in delight awhile;
Let some pleasing dream beguile
All my fancies, that from thence
I may feel an influence,
All my powers of care bereaving.

Tho' but a shadow, but a sliding,
Let me know some little joy.
We, that suffer long annoy,
Are contented with a thought
Thro' an idle fancy wrought:
O let my joys have some abiding.

John Fletcher (1579-1625)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

from **A Charm of Lullabies**

Sephestia's Lullaby

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by [him]¹ and me,
He was glad, I was woe;
Fortune changèd made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt;
More he crow'd, more we cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide:
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bliss,
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee

Robert Greene (1558-1592)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Urlicht

O Röschen rot,
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Not,
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pein,
Je lieber möchte ich im Himmel sein.
Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg,
Da kam ein Engellein und wollt mich abweisen,
Ach nein ich liess mich nicht abweisen.
Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott,
Der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtchen geben,
Wird leuchten mir bis an das ewig selig Leben.

Anon

Primeval light

O little red rose,
Man lies in greatest need,
Man lies in greatest pain.
I would prefer to be in heaven.
Then I came upon a wide road,
There came an Angel who wanted to turn me away.
But no, I would not be turned away!
I came from God and will return to God,
The dear God will give me a little light,
Will light my way to eternal, blessed life!

from *Rückert-Lieder*

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!

Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.

Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!

Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866)

I am lost to the world

I am lost to the world,
Where I wasted so much time,
It has heard nothing from me for so long
That it probably thinks I am dead!

It doesn't really matter to me at all,
If it thinks me dead;
Anyway I can't really deny it,
For I really am dead to the world.

I am dead to the world's tumult,
And I rest in a quiet place!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love and in my song!

Programme Notes

'Kathleen's Song Book'

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Let the florid music praise (from *On This Island*)

Benjamin Britten's cycle *On This Island* (1937) consists of settings of five poems by W.H. Auden. In the aftermath of the sudden death of Britten's friend Peter Burra, he composed Auden settings. Some of these were frivolous pastiche (although with more sombre words), but at the end of May he set some more, intended for performance by the Swiss soprano Sophie Wyss who had premièred his cycle *Our Hunting Fathers* earlier that year. Composition took longer than he had anticipated, and 'Let the florid music praise' took several months to complete. This song was the last for which his erstwhile teacher Frank Bridge offered suggestions – they disagreed about the opening, which originally featured a downward *glissando* in the piano part. Bridge disliked this but Britten insisted on keeping it – although he replaced the opening later.

George Crumb (1929-2022)

Three Early Songs

Night

Let it be forgotten

Wind Elegy

Crumb's *Three Early Songs* (1947) sets poems by Robert Southey (1774-1843) and Sara Teasdale (1884-1933). Coleridge called Southey 'the complete man of letters', as he wrote prolifically in a very wide variety of genres, but even though he became Poet Laureate in 1813 his prose was more admired than his poetry (and Byron called him 'mouthy Southey'). Sara Teasdale was born in St. Louis, Missouri to a wealthy family. In Chicago she was part of the literary scene and wrote seven books of well-crafted lyrical poetry, often based on her own experiences. She was popular with the public and critics, winning the first Columbia Poetry Prize in 1918 (later renamed the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry) – one reviewer said that 'Miss Teasdale is first, last, and always a singer.' In his own program notes George Crumb refers to these songs as 'the sins of his youth'. Although Crumb's later style emphasizes non-traditional instruments, alternative notational styles, and unusual timbres, this early song collection offers a glimpse of an emerging compositional voice, influenced by Aaron Copland. They use folk-like melodies with melodic and rhythmic ostinati in the piano, and Crumb pays special attention to tone colour, with open sonorities, unique pedalling, and repetitive melismatic figures.

Ernesto Lecuona (1895-1963)

Maria La O (from *Romanza de María La O*)

The Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona was a child prodigy, playing the piano and composing as a boy, and graduating from the National Conservatory in Havana aged 17. He studied briefly with Joaquín Turina in Spain and with Ravel in Paris, and gave piano recitals in Europe, South America, and New York City. Lecuona wrote over 600 works, mainly songs, *zarzuelas*, and piano music. He was also an active performer: he played *Rhapsody in Blue* at the Hollywood Bowl and learned only after the concert that Gershwin had been in the audience – the two later became close friends. Lecuona was one of the co-founders of the Havana Symphony Orchestra but he moved to Florida when Fidel Castro came to power. One of his most famous works is his *zarzuela* *Maria la O*, premiered in Havana on March 1, 1930. A *zarzuela* is a type of musical theatre that originated in Spain, on a smaller scale than opera and more popular in character, using texts that were spoken or sung. The plot is tragic: Maria is pursued by various suitors, their competition turns violent, and in one version of the *zarzuela* the father of Maria's unborn child is murdered. The song comes late in the drama, when Maria realizes that fate has turned against her.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Ganymed

Die junge Nonne

An die Musik

Schubert composed 'An die Musik' in March 1817 to a poem by his friend Franz von Schober. It was published in 1827 and only then was dedicated to the Viennese piano virtuoso Albert Sowinsky. It is one of Schubert's best-known songs, due to its harmonic simplicity and subtle interaction between the voice and the lower part of the piano accompaniment. 'Ganymed' was written in the same year. Goethe's poem tells the story, originating in Homer, of Ganymede, a Trojan shepherd abducted by Zeus to become his cupbearer. Homer does not go into Zeus's motivation, but later writers suggested it was either sexual or admiration for Ganymede's mind (Zeus does not have a strong record for the latter option). Goethe writes from the point of view of Ganymed himself. Throughout the piece, Schubert's harmonies shift between major and minor, with varied textures evoking Ganymede's impatience. The poem 'Der junge Nonne' is by the impressively named Jakob Nikolaus, Reichsfreiherr von Craigher de Jachelutta (1797-1855). Around 1820 Craigher had moved to Vienna, where he joined a circle of romantic poets. His poem includes many familiar romantic topics like the forest, the storm, and the grave, and these external

phenomena are linked with the narrator's own state of mind – except that the storm is happening now, and she sees her stormy emotions as something in the past, that she will escape in the convent. The orchestral character of the piano writing led to versions with orchestra made by Liszt and the conductor Weingartner – even a version by Schubert's brother Ferdinand for orchestra and female chorus. Musically, the storm continues even as she anticipates union with Christ, her bridegroom – the patter of semiquavers in the accompaniment suggesting falling snow, the piano *tremolando*, the low octaves, the ringing bell, all persist to the end – so she may not find the peace she seeks. The soprano Sophie Müller described in her diary singing 'Die junge Nonne' to Schubert and his friend the singer Johann Vogl: 'After lunch Schubert came and brought a new song, *Die junge Nonne*; later Vogl came, and I sang it to him; it is splendidly composed.'

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Widmung (from *Myrthen*)

'Widmung' is the opening song from Schumann's *Myrthen* cycle, composed in 1840, and it was one of Clara Schumann's favourite Schumann songs – *Myrthen* was dedicated to Clara as a wedding gift. It was later arranged as an instrumental piece and was particularly famous as a piano solo by Liszt. The key change from A flat to E at 'Du bist die Ruh' is particularly effective, while the return to A flat is seamless.

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Liebst du um Schönheit (from *Zwölf Gedichte aus 'Liebesfrühling'*)

Clara Schumann was one of the most distinguished pianists of the 19th century in a career that lasted over sixty years, and one who strongly influenced the piano recital format away from virtuoso displays to more serious content. She was a considerable composer of piano music, chamber music, and songs. 'Liebst du um Schönheit' comes from her three songs opus 12, first published as part of Robert Schumann's *12 Lieder* op. 37 – there was no indication in the first edition as to which songs were Clara's, but Robert noted the details in his own copy. Compared with Mahler's later setting, Clara Schumann's is more intimate and the piano part is fuller, supporting a simpler vocal line.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Von waldbekränzter Höhe
Unbewegte laue Luft
Wie Melodien (from *Fünf Lieder*)
Verzagen
Von ewiger Liebe

'Von waldbekränzter Höhe' is the first of Brahms's *8 Lieder und Gesänge* op. 57 from 1871. The poet wants everything in nature to bring him back to his beloved. The overall

mood of the song is consistent, but Brahms subtly creates a return to the opening music at the end. The voice ends the song with the opening melody reversed. 'Unbewegte laue Luft' is the last song in the op. 57 collection. The still atmosphere at the beginning is partly created by the slow tempo and the lack of a clear rhythmic pulse. 'Wie Melodien', from Brahms's op. 105 set (1888), opens with a striking phrase that recurs at each stanza – however this is not quite a strophic setting as Brahms varies the melody each time it returns. This changes dramatically when the poet's blood begins to race. 'Verzagen', from op. 72 (1877) is in three stanzas and set in the German 'Bar form', A-A-B (but the piano ends the song as it began). The piano creates the waves of the sea, and refuses the singer any rest. 'Von ewiger Liebe' (op. 43, 1869), by contrast, is almost folk-like at the start, rising to the girl's emphatic declaration, and almost returning to the folk simplicity at the end – but the couple have deepened their relationship.

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

Extase
L'invitation au voyage
Chanson triste

Henri Duparc studied the piano with César Franck and in 1872 became one of his first composition pupils. His reputation rests almost entirely on his thirteen *mélodies* which set poems by Baudelaire, Gautier, de Lisle, Prudhomme, and Goethe, among others. He ceased composition at 37, suffering from a mental illness, and lost his sight around the age of 50. Shortly afterwards he destroyed many of his compositions, including an unfinished opera based on Pushkin. Like Wolf, he both admired and knew Wagner, and 'Extase' shows an unmistakable *Wagnerisme* in its constant modulation – certain phrases even echo *Tristan und Isolde*. The voice ends with a sleep like death, and piano ends the song by repeating the phrase for 'mort exquis'. Duparc orchestrated several of his own songs, including 'L'invitation au voyage'. This setting of the first and third stanzas of Baudelaire's three-stanza poem retains the poem's finely balanced combination of sensuality and formal discipline. The 'canals' referred to are not those of Venice, but of the Netherlands, the source of Baudelaire's inspiration. Included in his collection *Les fleurs du mal*, even this luxurious evocation of holiday languor has its disquieting elements such as the 'fickle' eyes shining through tears (by the way, the opening lines refer not to a child, but to a mistress). Duparc's harmonies capture the rocking of the sea and the sparkle of sunlight, opening with alternating chords of C minor and an augmented 6th. The close in C major establishes the 'calme' of the closing lines. 'Chanson triste' was first composed for voice and piano in 1868/9 and then orchestrated in 1910/11. The poem's central idea is that the poet hopes to find solace and recovery by looking deep into the eyes of a woman. The sweeping arpeggios in the piano create a single mood, holding the singer as do her lover's arms.

Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Come to Me in my Dreams

Bridge was a string player, conductor, and composer – Britten was his only composition student. His earlier works already showed a tendency towards a more highly coloured harmonic language, and after WW1 this increased strikingly under the influence of Alban Berg; he became more experimental as he got older. ‘Come to me in my dreams’ (the poem itself is entitled ‘Longing’) is the first of several poems by Matthew Arnold set by Bridge. It expresses Arnold’s feelings when his marriage was forbidden by his fiancé’s father. Bridge composed the song in 1906, but revised it in 1918, and the first performance took place that year in the Wigmore Hall.

Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950)

Twilight

Moeran was the son of an Anglo-Irish clergyman, and his work was strongly influenced by English and Irish folk music. He wrote orchestral pieces, concertos, chamber and keyboard works, and a number of choral and song cycles as well as individual songs. His symphony in G minor and his concertos for cello and for violin are often performed. He studied at the Royal College of Music under Stanford before service in the army during the First World War, in which he was wounded. After the war he studied with John Ireland. His bohemian lifestyle and heavy drinking in the later 1920s interrupted his composition, but he resumed it in the 1930s. From 1934 onwards he dwelt mostly in the coastal town of Kenmare, Ireland, where he died in 1950 after falling into the water. ‘Twilight’ dates from 1936. The complex harmonies eventually give way to a simpler F major language as the poet remembers the kindness of those who have died.

Ivor Bertie Gurney (1890-1937)

Thou didst delight my eyes Sleep (from *Five Elizabethan Songs*)

Ivor Gurney was both a composer and a poet – Stanford thought him his most promising student among Bliss, Vaughan Williams, and Ireland. He suffered from depression before WW1 and was increasingly mentally ill after the war. The sad love song ‘Thou didst delight mine eyes’ unsettles us with the syncopated piano part and the poet’s apparent self-deprecation. ‘Sleep’ is one of Gurney’s *Five Elizabethan Songs*, composed at the end of 1913. The text by John Fletcher comes from his play *The Woman Hater* (1606?) where it is sung to General Gondarino, the woman-hater of the title, as a kind of teasing. The composer Gerald Finzi heard ‘Sleep’ in 1920 and ‘felt it to be one of the finest things of its type’; he arranged it for voice and strings. In the dark, muted key of B flat minor, the beautiful melody rises over a gently rocking accompaniment. The poet’s ‘joys’ do not ‘abide’ musically, but slide through subtle modulations which only take us into D flat major at the very end.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Sephestia’s Lullaby (from *A Charm of Lullabies*)

‘Sephestia’s Lullaby’ comes from Britten’s cycle *A Charm of Lullabies*, written in 1947 and first performed the following year in The Hague. It uses a poem by the Elizabethan writer Robert Greene (1558–1592) taken from his prose-poem (an early form of novel) called *Menaphon*. Greene himself claimed to have married a wealthy woman, spent her dowry, and abandoned her when she gave birth to his child; some said he kept a mistress who was the sister of a notorious Shoreditch gangster, and also abandoned her and their child called (ironically) Fortunatus. Greene’s early death was attributed to ‘a surfeit of pickle herring and Rhenish wine’. Menaphon meets Sephestia who is carrying a baby, having escaped from a wrecked ship. She sings to the child in two strongly contrasted moods.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Urlicht (from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*) Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen (from *Rückert-Lieder*)

‘Urlicht’ is from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a collection of folk poems published in 1805-08 and edited (very freely) by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. It was dedicated to Goethe, who wrote that it should be kept in every house. Many composers, including Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Schoenberg, set songs from this collection but Mahler’s settings are the most often performed. ‘Urlicht’ was included in the first edition of Mahler’s *Wunderhorn* songs in 1892, but it was replaced by another song, and ‘Urlicht’ then became a movement in Mahler’s second symphony. The hymn-like opening is almost fragmentary – there are frequent pauses and silences marked in the score – but after the singer meets the angel (the theme in the piano part may suggest folk fiddling on the road) the singer is more confident.

© Dr George Kennaway 2026

David Matthews (b. 1943)

Three Hopkins Sonnets, Op. 179

The Windhover

The Candle Indoors

As Kingfishers Catch Fire

I wrote these three settings of sonnets by the Jesuit priest poet Gerard Manley Hopkins for the 2026 Leeds Song Festival. They are dedicated to the Festival's Chair, Kathleen Evans, who chose these particular poems, which in their contrasting moods make a striking set of three. In each 14-line sonnet the opening octave is in strong contrast to the sextet that follows, and my music reflects this.

The first sonnet, 'The Windhover', Hopkins apparently considered was his best poem; it is certainly one of his most ecstatic. The octave describes in minute and superb detail the flight of the Kestrel, which hovers before plunging down on its prey. By a rather extraordinary chance, the day I finished writing my song I was walking along the Kent coast near Kingsdown where I live, when I saw a Kestrel hovering over the beach and then swooping down. I had never seen a Kestrel there before and it seemed like a greeting.

The second sonnet, 'The Candle Indoors', is mostly in quiet contrast. My friend Robbie Lamming pointed out to me that it is in one respect a meditation on the passage in the Sermon on the Mount in St Matthew's Gospel that begins 'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' and a little later 'Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.' The third sonnet, 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire', is initially exultant and joyous; its more contemplative sextet I have set rather like a hymn. It ends with a gentle C major chord: the two previous songs had ended with D major and G minor triads.

© David Matthews 2026

Biographies

Dame Sarah Connolly

Mezzo-soprano

Sarah Connolly was made a DBE in the 2017 Birthday Honours, having previously been awarded a CBE in the 2010 New Year Honours. In 2020 she was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society in recognition of her outstanding services to music.

In 2023 she was awarded The King's Medal for Music, an annual award recognising an outstanding individual or group of musicians who has had a major influence on the musical life of the nation.

She has sung at the Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Lucerne, Salzburg and Tanglewood Festivals, and at the BBC Proms where, in 2009, she was a soloist in the Last Night of the Proms. Her operatic engagements have taken her to many of the world's leading houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, La Scala Milan, the Vienna and Munich State Operas, and the Bayreuth, Glyndebourne and Aix-en-Provence Festivals.

Highlights of her 2025–26 season include *Jocasta* (*Oedipus Rex*) for the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet, and Mrs Patrick De Rocher (*Dead Man Walking*) for English National Opera.

On the concert platform she sings *Messiah* with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra under Christophe Rousset; *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra under Matthew Halls; Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra under Alexander Shelley and with the Aalborg Symfoniorkester under Joshua Weilerstein; Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra under Joel Sandelson; and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Symphony Orchestra of India under Martyn Brabbins.

Dame Sarah is a Vocal Professor and Fellow at her alma mater, the Royal College of Music, a Trustee of the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, and an Ambassador for the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestras Apprentices Programme.



David Matthews

Composer



With a singular body of work spanning almost 60 years, David Matthews has established an international reputation as one of the leading symphonists of our time. Born in London in 1943, he began composing at the age of sixteen. He read Classics at the University of Nottingham – where he has more recently been made an Honorary Doctor of Music – and afterwards studied composition privately with Anthony Milner. He was also helped by the advice and encouragement of Nicholas Maw and spent three years as an assistant to Benjamin Britten in the late 1960s. In the 1970s a friendship with the Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe (leading to collaboration and numerous trips to Sydney) helped Matthews find his own distinctive voice.

The natural world provides Matthews with a constant source of inspiration, and his scores often evoke strong feelings of place and are filled with birdsong. As well as growing out of his English background, his musical language is also strongly connected to the central European tradition – back through Mahler to Beethoven. He has been preoccupied with working in the great inherited forms of the past – symphony, string quartet, and oratorio – and the task of finding new ways to renew them. Matthews's music unashamedly embraces his own brand of tonality and he retains a firm commitment to a music that is grounded in song and dance, and is connected to the vernacular.

Matthews has been the recipient of numerous BBC Proms commissions, including *Cantiga*, his dramatic 1988 scena for soprano and orchestra, and the *Concerto in Azzurro* for cellist Steven Isserlis, which was nominated for a 2003 BBC Radio 3 Listeners' Award. Matthews has written prodigiously for string quartet and in his vocal music has set poets from E.E. Cummings and Rilke to Housman and D.H. Lawrence, Hill, Eliot and Auden to Sappho (in the original Greek). Choral music is equally important. Matthews composed his most ambitious work to date, *Vespers* for soloists, chorus and orchestra, for the Huddersfield Choral Society in 1994, and his 2014 anthem *To what God shall we chant our songs of battle?* was broadcast live on BBC Television as part of a vigil at Westminster Abbey commemorating the outbreak of the First World War.

Since 1985 Matthews has split his time between London and Deal, where from 1989 to 2003 he was Artistic Director of the Deal Festival. Matthews has largely avoided teaching, but has undertaken editorial work to support his composing career, collaborating with Deryck Cooke on the performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony, editing the music of Vaughan

Williams, and orchestrating film music (most notably for Carl Davis). He has written books on the music of Tippett and Britten, and penned numerous reviews for music journals. A collection of writings by and about Matthews was published by Plumbago Books to mark his 70th birthday in 2014.

For a long time the Music Advisor to the English Chamber Orchestra, Matthews also enjoys particularly close relationships with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Nash Ensemble and the Britten Sinfonia (with whom he was Composer in Residence from 1997-1999). His music has been recorded extensively, with his symphonic output attracting particularly appreciative reviews: 'one of our leading composers' wrote Calum MacDonald in BBC Music Magazine, 'a leading 21st-century exponent of the form' wrote Arnold Whittall in Gramophone. In 2011, the Dutton recording of his Second and Sixth Symphonies with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales was awarded a prestigious BBC Music Magazine Award.

Matthews' 80th birthday in 2023 saw the composer celebrated by the BBC Philharmonic, Ulster Orchestra, the Deal, Little Missenden and Presteigne Festivals, and the creation of a new film about the composer by Barrie Gavin *A Composer's Landscape*. Recent works include the 2019 *Concerto for Orchestra*, *Symphony No. 10* (premièred by the BBC Philharmonic and Jac van Steen), and his first opera *Anna*, with a libretto by Roger Scruton, and presented at the 2023 Grange Festival. He has also added to his prodigious body of chamber music with an Oboe Sonata for Nicholas Daniel, Sixteenth and Seventeenth string quartets for longstanding collaborators the Kretuzers (engaged in a multi-volume project to record Matthews' complete quartets), and the *Kingsdown Suite* for solo guitar, commissioned by the Julian Bream Trust and premiered at Wigmore Hall in 2023 by Pavel Raley. 2024 will see the premièred of Matthews' *Symphony No.11* and a new Flute Concerto, as well as a symphonic suite from *Anna*.

Rachel Munroe

Soprano

Award-winning Scottish soprano Rachel Munro holds a Master of Music in Performance from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and a degree in Mathematics from the University of St Andrews. She currently studies with Wilma MacDougall, and her training has been generously supported by the RCS Trust, the Cross Trust and the Scottish International Education Trust.

During her time in St Andrews she performed roles including Mabel (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Gianetta (*The Gondoliers*), Nora (*Riders to the Sea*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Mary Crawford (*Mansfield Park*) and Mélisande (*Pelléas et Mélisande*). Upon graduating, she was awarded the Cedric Thorpe Davie Prize for her outstanding contribution to the musical life of the University.

Further performed roles include the Lay Sister (*Suor Angelica*, Opera Bohemia 2025), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*, Fife Opera 2024), Musetta (*La bohème*, Fife Opera 2025) and cover Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*, RCS 2025).

Alongside her duo partner Jia Ning Ng, Rachel won First Prize in the Northern Aldborough Festival's 2025 New Voices Singing Competition and was a finalist in the inaugural Rebecca Clarke Song Competition. In 2026 they return to the Northern Aldborough Festival for a Winners' Recital and join the Oxford International Song Festival for the 2026–27 Young Artist Programme.



As a soloist, Rachel has performed at leading UK venues including Wigmore Hall and Caird Hall. She is also committed to outreach work and has been actively involved in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's Craigmillar Residency, culminating in the world première of new works created in collaboration with the local community at Edinburgh's Queen's Hall.

Rachel is a 2026 Alvarez Emerging Artist with Garsington Opera and will return to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in September to begin the new Advanced Artist Diploma in Opera, delivered in collaboration with Scottish Opera.

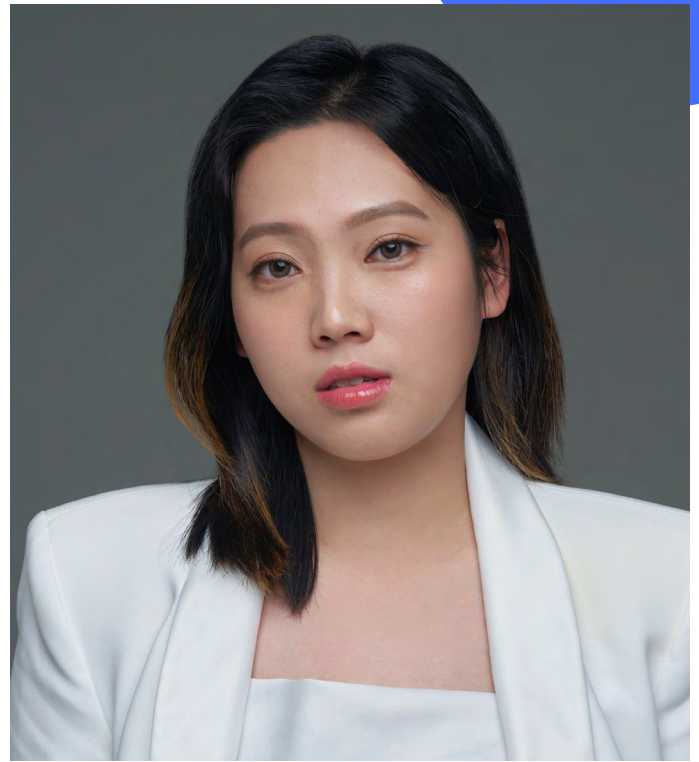
Jia Ning Ng

Piano

Singaporean pianist Jia Ning Ng is a collaborative and concert pianist based in Glasgow, where she works as Staff Accompanist at both the Junior and Senior Conservatoire at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. A graduate of the Conservatoire, she was appointed to the faculty shortly after completing her Artist Diploma, Master's degree and FirstClass Honours Bachelor's degree in Piano Performance. Upon graduation, she was endorsed by Arts Council England under the Global Talent route, recognising her as an exceptional artist in her field.

Jia Ning is an active collaborative pianist with a particular interest in art song and chamber music. In 2026 she has been selected for a Lied masterclass at Projeto Canção in April and will return as an Oxford Song Young Artist for the 2026–27 season. She is also an alumna of the Wigmore Hall French Song Exchange, the Leeds Song Festival Young Artists Programme and the Oxford Song Young Artist Programme. She has appeared at venues including Wigmore Hall, London, and Salle Cortot, Paris, as well as venues throughout England and Scotland.

In 2025, Jia Ning won First Prize at the Northern Aldborough Festival New Voices Singing Competition with soprano Rachel Munro. Together they will perform at the Leeds Song Festival in April 2026 and return to the Northern Aldborough Festival for a Winners' Recital in June 2026, and they are semifinalists in the 2026 Rebecca Clarke Song Competition.



As a solo pianist, Jia Ning has performed widely across Scotland and the UK. She made her début with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra after winning the RCS Concerto Competition and was awarded the Conservatoire's Governor's Recital Prize for Keyboard upon graduation, leading to a Scottish concert tour. Her awards include the Philip Halstead Prize, Walcer Recital Prize, Mozart Memorial Concerto Prize and the Performance Prize for Keyboard. Her studies were fully supported by scholarships from the Inches Carr Trust and the Craxton Memorial Trust. In February and March 2026 she will give solo recitals for music societies in Inverness and Dollar.

Joseph Middleton

Piano

Joseph Middleton is widely regarded as one of the most exceptional and creative pianists of his generation, specialising in song accompaniment and chamber music at the highest international level. Hailed by *Gramophone* as “the absolute king of programming” and by *The New York Times* as “the perfect accompanist”, he collaborates with many of the world’s foremost singers, performing at venues and festivals across Europe, North America and Asia.

A passionate advocate for the power of song, Joseph is the Artistic Director of Leeds Song, praised by *The Guardian* for its “world-class” programming and by *The Times* as a “Northern powerhouse of song”. He also curates series for BBC Radio 3, Wigmore Hall and the University of Cambridge, where he founded and directs their Lieder Scheme. Joseph is Musician in Residence at Pembroke College. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, where he is Professor of Ensemble Piano, and was made a Bye-Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge by Lord Chris Smith. Joseph is the first — and to date, only — accompanist to receive the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Young Artist Award, the UK’s most prestigious recognition for a classical musician.

Joseph appears regularly at leading international venues including Wigmore Hall, where he has been a featured artist with series on Ravel, Mahler and Strauss; the Royal Opera House, the Barbican and Southbank Centre; Alice Tully Hall and the Park Avenue Armory in New York; the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; Vienna Konzerthaus and Musikverein; Hamburg Elbphilharmonie; Berlin Pierre Boulez Saal and Philharmonie; Cologne Philharmonie; Madrid’s Teatro de la Zarzuela; Baden-Baden Festspielhaus; Zurich Tonhalle; Paris’s Musée d’Orsay; and Oji Hall, Tokyo. Festival highlights include Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Heidelberger Frühling, Munich, San Francisco, Ravinia, the Schubertiade in Hohenems and Schwarzenberg, Seoul, Toronto and Vancouver.

He has enjoyed fruitful partnerships with Sir Thomas Allen, Louise Alder, Mary Bevan, Ian Bostridge, Allan Clayton, Dame Sarah Connolly, Marianne Crebassa, Véronique Gens, Iestyn Davies, Fatma Said, Huw Montague Rendall, Christiane Karg, Sir Simon Keenlyside, Elsa Dreisig, Angelika Kirchschrager, Katharina Konradi, Dame Felicity Lott, Christopher Maltman, John Mark Ainsley, Ann Murray DBE, James Newby, Mark



Padmore, Konstantin Krimmel, Mauro Peter, Miah Persson, Sophie Rennert, Dorothea Röschmann, Carolyn Sampson, Nicky Spence and Roderick Williams.

His award-winning discography on Warner, Harmonia Mundi, BIS, Chandos and Signum, amongst others, includes multiple honours: the Diapason d’Or, Edison Award and Prix Caecilia, alongside nominations for *Gramophone*, *Opus Klassik*, *BBC Music Magazine* and the International Classical Music Awards. Committed to expanding the song repertoire, he has commissioned and premiered works by composers including Thomas Adès, Helen Grime, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Hannah Kendall, Errollyn Wallen, Mark Simpson and Nico Muhly. At the 2018 BBC Proms he premiered recently discovered songs by Benjamin Britten alongside Dame Sarah Connolly. He is frequently called upon to give masterclasses, with recent seasons taking him to Toronto Summer Music, Ravinia in Chicago, Britten-Pears in Aldeburgh, deSingel Antwerp, Samling and the Royal Opera House, London.

Highlights of the 2025–26 season include recitals alongside Dorothea Röschmann, Fatma Said, Louise Alder, Elsa Dreisig, Dame Sarah Connolly, Huw Montague Rendall, Hera Hyesang Park, Katharina Konradi, Carolyn Sampson and Hugh Cutting at venues including Wigmore Hall, the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía, Valencia, the Grand Théâtre de Genève, the Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam, and the Prinzregententheater, Munich. With Vera-Lotte Boecker he will also perform Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und -leben* in staged performances at the Staatsoper Hamburg. His recording projects include an ongoing fivealbum set of Mahler Lieder for Signum Records.



**opera
north**

Your 2026–27 year of opera

Eugene Onegin

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Rigoletto

Giuseppe Verdi

A Christmas Carol

Will Todd

Don Giovanni

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Dead Man Walking

Jake Heggie

Orpheus

Claudio Monteverdi / Jasdeep Singh Degun

Book a package, see more for less!

operanorth.co.uk/packages



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Leeds Song People

Founder

Jane Anthony

President

Elly Ameling

Director

Joseph Middleton

Honorary Patrons

Dame Sarah Connolly CBE

John Gilhooly CBE

Graham Johnson OBE

Dame Felicity Lott DBE

Richard Stokes HON RAM

Trustees

Dr Stewart Campbell

Michael Chance CBE *Chair Designate*

Jasdeep Singh Degun

Jane Dowson

Kathleen Evans BEM *Chair*

Rachael Green *Treasurer*

Dr George Kennaway

Peggy Pullan

Helen Stephens

Cynthia Wainwright *Company Secretary*

Committee Members

Kate Dugdale

Jillian Johnson MBE

Administrator, Friends of Leeds Song

James Marsh

Emeritus Committee Members

Graham Hearn

Leeds Song Staff

Rachel Cotton *Young Artists Coordinator*

Damaris Laker *PR*

Madeleine Middleton *Project Manager*

Jessie Randhawa *Marketing & Media Manager*

Cynthia Wainwright *Freelance Fundraiser*

Tristan Watson *General Manager*

Phil Wilcox *Learning & Participation Manager*

A big thank you to the following people for their invaluable help

Apple and Biscuit Recordings Limited:

Alex Barnes and Kit Mackenzie

Festival Event Streaming

Ruth Hansford

Surtitles

Helen Stephens

Translations

Dr Katy Hamilton, Dr George Kennaway,

Mark Rogers, Keval Shah, Richard Stokes,

Nardus Williams and Roderick Williams

Programme Notes

Dr Katy Hamilton, Martin Iddon,

Dr George Kennaway, Libby Larsen,

Mark Rogers and Richard Stokes

Pre-Concert Talks

Martin Iddon and Hannah Stone

Composers & Poets Forum Leaders

India Ashbury, Greg Bush and

Caitlin Duncombe

Freelance Events Staff

David Simpson

Provision of lighting equipment at

The Attic, Left Bank Leeds and Brodrick Hall

Shigeru Kawai

Provision of pianos at

The Attic and Brodrick Hall

John Tordoff

Piano Tuner and Technician

Tony Green and colleagues

Howard Assembly Room

Maisie Wood, George Clarke, and

colleagues

Leeds Conservatoire

David Brown, Amy Illingworth and Sol

Edwards

The Attic

Sara Merritt and colleagues

Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum

Sam Gundelfinger and colleagues

Left Bank Leeds

Staff at the Royal Armouries

The team at

Leeds International Piano Competition

Ian Calow

Programme Design

Dr Stewart Campbell

University of York

TC Murray Harcourt Limited

Our Independent Examiners

Our invaluable team of Festival volunteers

Please note that, in alignment with our commitment to sustainability, this programme and set of texts and translations will only be available digitally online via Leeds Song website.

We kindly ask that you either download the programme to your mobile device in advance or print your own copy to bring with you, as printed copies will not be provided.

QR codes will be available around the venue should you wish to access the programme upon arrival. You are welcome to use your mobile device to view song texts during the recital, but please ensure that your device is switched to silent mode and that your screen brightness is turned down so as not to disturb the performers or fellow audience members.

Leeds Song gratefully acknowledges the generous support of:

Principal Partners

The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation
BBC Radio 3
Howard Assembly Room
Leeds City Council
Leeds Conservatoire
Leeds International Concert Season
Leeds City Museum
Mayfield Valley Arts Trust
Opera North
University of Leeds
West Yorkshire Music Hub

2026 Festival Funders

Arts Council England
The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
The Hinrichsen Foundation
The Idlewild Trust
The Marchus Trust
Vaughan Williams Foundation

Trusts and Foundations

The Jean Meikle Music Trust
The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund
The Rix-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation
Wade's Charity

And everyone who so generously gave to the Big Give Arts for Impact Campaign

Individual Donors

Elizabeth Arnold
The late Olav Arnold
The late Jane Bonner
Kate Dugdale
Sir Vernon Ellis
Clive and Virginia Lloyd
Peter and Veronica Lofthouse
Mark and Peggy Pullan
Martin Staniforth

Other Partners

ArtForms Music Service
Art Song Challenge
The Attic
Chapel FM
Classic FM
Heidelberger Frühling
Leeds Arts University
Leeds 400
Left Bank Leeds
The Leeds International Piano Competition
LIEDBasel Festival
Liedstadt
Pyramid of Arts
Royal Armouries
Schubertiada Vilabertran
Shigeru Kawai
South Asian Arts-uk



[Click here to become a Friend](#)

The Friends of Leeds Song play a vital role in supporting the work of the organisation, whilst providing ambassadorship, community and generous support throughout the year.

The generous donations from the Friends contribute towards our Education programmes, Young Artist training, and mounting an annual world-class festival of song.

Why not join today and access a range of benefits including priority booking, invitations to special events and advance information? Please go to the 'Support Us' section by scanning the QR code above, or by visiting www.leedssong.com for full details and a downloadable application form. You can also ring the Festival Office on 0113 243 4438, email info@leedssong.com to request a form, or pick one up during the Festival.

"... under the dynamic direction of the pianist Joseph Middleton since 2014, the Leeds Song festival has brought musical riches to Yorkshire through star performers, engaging new commissions and bold educational projects."

The Times

President
Elly Ameling

Director
Joseph Middleton

Guest of Honour
Bernarda Fink

leedssong.com

Instagram @LeedsSong

X @Leeds_Song

Facebook @LeedsSong

YouTube @LeedsSong

Design: Calow Design Ltd



Leeds Song, Yorkshire Dance, 3 St Peter's Buildings, St Peter's Square, Leeds LS9 8AH
Registered charity number 1105803