



Leeds Song is a Registered Charity: 1105803 (under previous operational name Leeds Lieder+ Ltd).

'A LEEDS SONGBOOK' – INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS PROJECT
LEEDS SONG FESTIVAL, SATURDAY 10 APRIL – SATURDAY 17 APRIL 2027

Leeds Song (formerly Leeds Lieder) is delighted to announce its 2027 'A Leeds Songbook' Project as part of its 2027 Festival (Saturday 10 April - Saturday 17 April 2027). The purpose of the project is to provide an opportunity for composers from the HE sector to collaborate with Yorkshire-based poets and visual artists in the creation of new songs and works of art to be workshopped, publicly performed and presented in a Showcase and Exhibition during the Festival.

Leeds Song has an excellent track record for supporting new music and in recent years has commissioned major cycles from Helen Grime, Errollyn Wallen, Hannah Kendall, Daniel Kidane, Judith Bingham, Mark Simpson, Tansy Davies, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Martin Iddon and David Matthews, amongst others.

This year, we will build on the work produced as part of the project for the last 4 years and continue with the creation of 'A Leeds Songbook'; stories about the people of Leeds, told by poets of Leeds, set to music by outstanding composers and performed by award-winning young singers and pianists taking part in our Young Artists Programme. For 2026, a visual component was added to the project, and this will continue to be developed in 2027 when we will again invite a group of artists to create a piece of visual art to accompany/represent the themes/subject of each of the new songs created which will be presented in an exhibition to accompany the showcase of the new songs during our 2027 Festival.

Some further information about the project in previous years can be found in media articles via the following links:

Leeds TV – 2026 Leeds Songbook feature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ0GHO84ASs>

Radio 3 Music Matters – Leeds Songbook interviews: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001lzdq> (27 mins 26 secs)

The Guardian – <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jun/15/leeds-lieder-festival-review-from-inner-city-to-international-world-class-music-making>

This is a collaborative project with poets, composers and artists working in groups of 3 representing the same subject and its themes in poetry, song and visual art. It is our intention that the process will be a communal one, with the poet, composer and artist of each group communicating, liaising and exchanging ideas with one-another with regards their creative representation of the subject.

The programme from this year's showcase and exhibition with information about the composers, poets, artists and new songs and artworks created can be viewed on our website here:

<https://www.leedssong.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/LS26-CP-PROG-17-composers-and-poets-showcase-and-exhibition.pdf>

The 2026 performance showcase of the new songs can be viewed here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfJ99T_erw

The project will take place over a number of sessions as follows:

Saturday 28 November 2026 - Preliminary Meeting for Composers and Poets (Leeds Conservatoire)

The formation of composer/poet partnerships will take place at a preliminary meeting in Leeds where all parties will be asked to introduce their work briefly: poets by reading aloud, composers by playing recordings. Details of the song-writing brief will be given and discussed. After this, everyone is free to mingle over a light lunch after which composer/poet pairings will be decided. **(Visual Artists will not attend this session).**

Visual artists will be recruited separately during the autumn and allocated to the composer/poet pairings by the **end of November/early December**.

An online group introductory meeting will be organised with artist participants on **Tuesday 17 November 2026 at 1pm**. Additionally, the individual groups of 3 allocated composer/poet/artist participants will be encouraged to discuss their ideas/subject for the new song/artwork at a mutually convenient time **during December** (these meetings could take place online or in person as appropriate).

Festival Week – April 2027

There will be all-day workshop sessions during the Festival week, a culmination exhibition presenting the new artworks created for the project, and a showcase performance of the new songs given by singer/pianist participants of the Young Artists Programme.

The workshops are group working sessions led and facilitated by the project Convenors during which each composer/poet/artist would have the opportunity to hear their new song performed by the Young Artists, and for the artist to present their artwork, with some rehearsal of the music and discussion of the subject, text and artwork. We encourage all project participants to attend all sessions where possible to allow for open group discussion about each of the works produced.

Leeds Song's Poets Convenor Hannah Stone (poet and academic), and Composers Convenor Martin Iddon, (Professor of Music and Aesthetics, University of Leeds) will lead the workshops.

Participants are also offered complimentary tickets to attend 2 special Festival recitals detailed below.

A provisional draft outline schedule for the Festival week is as follows (please note that this may be subject to amendment):

Saturday 10 April 2027

1pm-2pm: Lunchtime Opening Recital - **Kitty Whately** mezzo-soprano, **Anna Tilbrook** piano, **James Mayhew** artist (Venue: The Venue, Leeds Conservatoire, Leeds)

Watch a song come to life! As part of the project, we invite all participants of the Leeds Songbook project to attend our opening concert of the Festival. During this one-of-a-kind interdisciplinary recital, mezzo-soprano Kitty Whately sings and pianist Anna Tilbrook plays, while acclaimed artist James Mayhew will create a world of colour and imagery live on stage. His illustrations will unfold in real time, projected above the musicians, transforming the music before your eyes and allowing each song to take on a life of its own. The performance brings together music and visual art in an extraordinary shared act of imagination — the audience watching, listening and discovering the work as it happens.

Tickets for Leeds Song Project participants are complimentary (attendance at this event is not obligatory as we appreciate some participants may be based further afield and outside Leeds).

Tuesday 13 April 2027

10.30am – 5.30pm: Workshop sessions (including a break for lunch)
(Venue: Howard Opera Centre, Leeds)

7.30pm: Evening Recital: 'Star Falling' – **Carolyn Sampson** soprano, **Joseph Middleton** piano and **Andrew Staples** creative director
(Venue: Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum, Leeds)

As part of the project, we invite all participants of the Leeds Songbook project to attend a unique concert, 'Star Falling'. This is an immersive staged recital realised by creative director Andy Staples, pianist Joseph Middleton and soprano Carolyn Sampson.

Tickets for participants are complimentary. This is an opportunity for participants to see a performance of a varied art-song programme featuring both traditional and contemporary repertoire, with 2 brand new compositions performed, interpreted visually through imaginative and evocative lighting design. Below is some more information about the programme:

'Star Falling' brings together music from nearly nine centuries in an atmospheric world of light, darkness, silence and wonder. Inspired by Messiaen's extraordinary *Chants de terre et de ciel*, the programme moves from the visionary music of Hildegard von Bingen through Crumb, Boulanger, Dutilleux and Messiaen, exploring states of being rather than telling a single story. In the evocative surroundings of Brodrick Hall, lighting and projections by Andy Staples will transform the space around the performers, creating a visual landscape in which music, poetry and image become one. The evening also looks firmly towards the future, with two world premières commissioned through the Royal Philharmonic Society's Composers Programme, by Roderick Williams and Aníbal Vidal.

Wednesday 14 April 2027

10am - 1pm Workshop sessions
(Venue: Howard Opera Centre, Leeds)

1pm - 2.30pm Lunch and move to Leeds City Museum for exhibition set-up and for Young Artists informal rehearsal in the concert hall.
(Venue: Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum)

2.30pm - 3pm Round-up/discussion of concert logistics/performance walk-through
(Venue: Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum)

Showcase performance and exhibition 4pm – 5.30pm (doors to exhibition open at 3.15pm)
(Venue: Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum)

Project Brief

The basic brief is as follows:

- Each composer/poet duo is to create an original song for solo voice and piano with a duration of 3-4 minutes maximum.
- The subject brief is detailed below.
- Each artist is to create a piece of visual art to accompany/represent the themes/subject of the new song. Artworks can be produced in any standard chosen visual media (to include, but not exclusively: painting, drawing, sculpture, textile, collage, printing, photography, videography, digital, mixed media etc) which can be easily transported by the artist and displayed simply in a standard exhibition set-up (any specific technical requirements (e.g projectors, screens etc for digital media to be provided by the artist). Maximum size to be confirmed but c. 1m x 1m x 1m.
- For reasons of programming, we must impose a limit of 10 composer/poet/visual artist trios. Voice-types/vocal range of performers may be designated for compositions, depending on the Young Artist performers selected.

- Poets to write a poem on the subject of their choice to (a Leeds person), to be completed and shared with composer and artist by **Monday 4 January 2027**.
- Visual artist to plan and draft a proposal of what their artwork will be (in the form of basic sketches, plans and/or written proposal) reflecting the subject/themes of the poem and planned song, to be completed and shared with composer and poet by **Friday 22 January 2027**.
- A working draft of all songs must be completed by composers and submitted to Leeds Song by **Friday 26 February 2027** at the latest in order that scores may be distributed to the Young Artists and music prepared by them in advance of the workshop days on 13 and 14 April.
- Visual artists to complete artwork and submit photograph of their work (and share this with composer and poet) by **Friday 19 March 2027**. This photo to be included in the exhibition/showcase performance digital programme.

Subject Brief

The subject of the brief for creating a song for 'A Leeds Songbook', and an accompanying artwork, is as follows:

We would like poets to write about real-life living Leeds people and their stories. The premise of this idea, and one which is at the centre of our work to make the art form more widely accessible, is that by representing Leeds people in song and visual art, and engaging with them through their stories, we would attempt to broaden the usual reach of our output and that of the art-song genre.

The poems do not need to be about a well-known figure, quite the reverse in fact - the stories may be ordinary or extraordinary of any Leeds person.

Ideally poets (and composers/visual artists as appropriate) would engage directly with the individuals whose stories they are telling. It would be wonderful to be able to invite these people along to the April workshops, and to the showcase performance and exhibition so that they hear and see their stories come to life. This is an exciting opportunity for you to champion the art-form that you love and for us to introduce it to new audiences and communities.

Summary of Key Dates for Artists

- **End of November/beginning December 2026:** Artist/Composer/Poet groups confirmed
- **Tuesday 17 November 2026, 1pm/2pm:** Online group introductory meeting will for all artist participants
- **December 2026:** Groups of 3 Composer/Poet/Artist participants will be encouraged to discuss their ideas/subject for the new song/artwork at a mutually convenient time remotely online or in person
- **By Monday 4 January 2027:** Poet to share completed poem with Artist and Composer
- **By Friday 15 January 2027:** Young Artists duos to be allocated to a Composer/Poet/Artist group
- **By end of January:** Young Artists and Composer/Poet/Artist to meet to discuss the new song/artwork at a mutually convenient time remotely online.
- **By Friday 22 January 2027:** Artist to submit proposal of what their artwork will be (in the form of basic sketches, plans and/or written proposal)
- **Friday 19 March 2027:** Deadline for completion and submission of artwork
- **13 April 2027:** Workshops
- **14 April 2027:** Workshops, exhibition set-up, and performance showcase at Leeds City Museum and Brodrick Hall