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Leeds Song
Music gives a soul to the universe
Howard Assembly Room
LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE
THE ATTIC
ROYAL ARMOURIES
LEFT BANK
LEEDS city MUSEUM
leedssong.com
2026 Festival
Saturday 11 –
Saturday 18 April
"Leeds Song Festival ... from inner city to international, world-class music making."
The Guardian

"… 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 Honor
Bernarda Fink

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Music *gives a soul to the* universe

Welcome to Leeds Song Festival 2026.

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, Charles Cunliffe 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, Sir Thomas Allen, 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 winners, including Arko Mukhaerjee and Nishad Pandey, 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

p4	1 – 2pm	1 **Lunchtime Opening Recital**: Patricia Nolz and Joseph Middleton	The Venue, LC
p5	3 – 5.30pm	2 **Bring and Sing! Rehearsal** with Gareth Malone OBE	The Venue, LC
p5	6pm	3 **Bring and Sing! Concert** with Gareth Malone OBE: Haydn *Nelson Mass*	The Venue, LC
p6	6.30 – 7pm	4 **Pre-concert Talk** with Richard Stokes	HAR
p6	7.30pm	5 **Evening Opening Recital**: Louise Alder, Huw Montague Rendall and Joseph Middleton	HAR

Sunday 12 April

p7	10am – 12.30pm	6 **Festival Masterclass I**: Bernarda Fink	The Venue, LC
p8	2 – 3pm	7 **Lunchtime Recital**: Nardus Williams and Elizabeth Kenny	Royal Armouries Museum
p9	4 – 5.30pm	8 **Young Artists Study Event** with Richard Stokes	Recital Room, LC
p9	6 – 7pm	9 **Friends of Leeds Song** Private Reception	Rooftop Bar, LC
p10	6.30 – 7pm	10 **Pre-concert Talk** with Richard Stokes	The Venue, LC
p10	7.30pm	11 **Evening Recital**: Marianne Crebassa and Joseph Middleton	The Venue, LC

Monday 13 April

p11	10am – 1pm	12 **Friends' Festival Masterclass II**: Bernarda Fink	Linacre Studio, HOC
p11	2pm – 5pm	13 **Friends' Festival Masterclass III**: Mark Padmore CBE	Linacre Studio, HOC

Tuesday 14 April

p12	10am – 1pm	14 **Festival Masterclass IV**: Bernarda Fink	Linacre Studio, HOC
p12	6 – 8pm	15 **Evening Recital**: Roderick Williams OBE and Iain Burnside	The Venue, LC
p14	9pm	16 **Late Night Recital**: *Dunwich*: An intermedia première by Martin Iddon	The Attic

Wednesday 15 April

p15	5 – 7pm	17 **Composers & Poets Forum Showcase and exhibition**: 'A Leeds Songbook'	Brodrick Hall, Leeds City Museum
p16	8pm	18 **Evening Recital**: Helen Charlston and Sholto Kynoch	Left Bank Leeds

Thursday 16 April

p17	12 – 1.30pm	19 **Young Artists Showcase**	HAR
p17	3 – 6pm	20 **Festival Masterclass V**: Sir Thomas Allen	Linacre Studio, HOC
p18	6.30 – 7pm	21 **Pre-concert Talk** with Dr. Katy Hamilton	HAR
p18	7.30pm	22 **Evening Recital**: Axelle Fanyo, Fleur Barron and Julius Drake	HAR
p19	9.45 – 11pm	23 **Late Night Lieder Lounge** with Leeds Song Young Artists	Kino @ HAR

Friday 17 April

p20	10am – 12.30pm	24 **Festival Masterclass VI**: Roger Vignoles	Linacre Studio, HOC
p20	1 – 2pm	25 **Lunchtime Recital**: Charles Cunliffe and Jong Sun Woo	HAR
p21	3 – 6pm	26 **Festival Masterclass VII**: Anna Tilbrook	Linacre Studio, HOC
p21	6.30 – 7pm	27 **Pre-concert Talk** with Mark Rogers	HAR
p22	7.30pm	28 **Evening Recital**: Katharina Konradi and Joseph Middleton	HAR
p23	9.45 – 11pm	29 **Late Night Recital**: Arko Mukhaerjee and Nishad Pandey: Art Song Challenge 2025	Kino @ HAR

Saturday 18 April

p24	11am – 12pm	30 **Coffee Recital**: Theodore Platt and Keval Shah	The Venue, LC
p25	2 – 3.30pm	31 **Young Artists** Finale Concert	The Venue, LC
p25	6 – 6.30pm	32 **Pre-concert Talk** with Dr George Kennaway	Rooftop Bar, LC
p26	7pm	33 **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
(X) = event number

All information correct at the time of going to print.
Leeds Song reserves the right to change artists, programmes and events if necessary.

Saturday 11 April

Sat 11 April, 1–2pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Lunchtime Opening Recital ①

Patricia Nolz mezzo-soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Young mezzo-soprano Patricia Nolz is already recognized as one of Austria's most outstanding vocal talents. A protégé of Florian Boesch, she has swiftly established herself as an artist of exceptional calibre, regularly appearing at the Vienna State Opera in roles such as Cherubino, Zerlina, Annio, and Rosina. She made a notable Edinburgh Festival debut as Cherubino with the Komische Oper Berlin and has performed with the Vienna Symphony and Gewandhaus Orchestras.

Last season, the Wiener Konzerthaus named her a "Great Talent," programming her extensively in both recitals and orchestral concerts. For Leeds Song, Nolz presents a programme steeped in the intensity of German Romanticism, featuring works by Wolf and Zemlinsky, culminating in Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* – his 1840 song cycle that traces the joys and sorrows of a woman's journey through love and life.

Leeds Song has a proud tradition of introducing exceptional young European artists to UK audiences – this recital promises to be yet another milestone about which you'll want to say, "I was there."

© Klara Leschanz

Hugo Wolf
Auf einer Wanderung
Um Mitternacht
Begegnung
Das verlassene Mägdlein
Heimweh

Alexander von Zemlinsky
6 Gesänge nach Maeterlinck

Robert Schumann
Frauenliebe und -leben

Sat 11 April, 3–5.30pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Bring and Sing! Rehearsal

Joseph Haydn *Nelson Mass* ②

with **Gareth Malone OBE**
and **Leeds Song Young Artists**

Tickets £18 per singer

Gareth Malone needs little introduction. Presenter of the BAFTA-award-winning TV series *The Choir*, he has inspired countless individuals to take up the joyous pursuit of choral singing. Leeds Song is delighted to welcome Gareth to the city for a second year, to train the Leeds Song *Bring and Sing! Chorus* in Haydn's triumphant choral work, the *Nelson Mass*. Come along and enjoy raising your voices in uplifting harmony!

Rehearsals begin at 3pm followed by a performance at 6pm. Refreshments will be available at Leeds Conservatoire. Please confirm your voice type at the point of booking. Details of the edition to be used will be communicated to participants nearer the time.

Sat 11 April, 6pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Bring and Sing! Concert

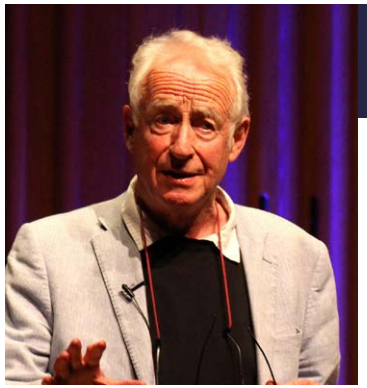
Joseph Haydn *Nelson Mass* ③

with **Gareth Malone OBE**

Tickets £8, £4 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Come and support the newly-formed Leeds Song *Bring and Sing! Chorus*, alongside the Leeds Song Young Artists, as they perform Haydn's celebrated masterwork, the *Nelson Mass*, under the expert direction of television's popular choirmaster, Gareth Malone.

Saturday 11 April



Sat 11 April, 6.30–7pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Pre-concert Talk ④ with Richard Stokes

Tickets FREE (please book in advance)

Leeds Song Patron and Professor of Lieder at the Royal Academy of Music, Richard Stokes, gives one of his typically illuminating talks to introduce the evening recital. One of the leading authorities on poetry set to music, Richard will provide insight and context to the varied selection of repertoire featured in this eclectic programme.

Sat 11 April, 7.30pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Evening Opening Recital ⑤

Louise Alder soprano
Huw Montague Rendall baritone
Joseph Middleton piano

Tickets £28, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Two of the brightest stars in opera and song, Louise Alder and Huw Montague Rendall, return to Leeds fresh from acclaimed performances at the BBC Proms and Glyndebourne, joining their longtime collaborator Joseph Middleton for an unforgettable evening. They open with the joyful elegance of Purcell and the rich Romanticism of Schumann and Brahms.

After the interval, a vibrant potpourri of French songs sparkles with wit, sensuality, and charm, leading to a dazzling finale of irresistible showtunes that will have you leaving with toes tapping and spirits soaring.

© Will Alder

As *The Guardian* raved, "Alder and Rendall's performances are electrifying — a perfect blend of passion, precision, and warmth that captivates from first note to last." Meanwhile, *The New York Times* praised pianist Joseph Middleton as "the perfect accompanist."

Don't miss the festival's spectacular opening night — an evening of enchantment, artistry, and sheer joy.

Henry Purcell
arr. Benjamin Britten
Sound the Trumpet
Lost is my quiet
Man is for the woman made
Music for a while
Hark the echoing air
Alleluia
No, resistance is but vain

Robert Schumann
Tanzlied
Er und sie
Unterm Fenster
In der Nacht

Johannes Brahms
Vor der Tür
Unbewegte laue Luft
Vergebliches Ständchen
Feldeinsamkeit
Ach, wende diesen Blick
Die Meere
Die Boten der Liebe

Interval

Camille Saint-Saëns
Pastorale

Gabriel Fauré
Pleurs d'or

Erik Satie
Gymnopédie

André Messager
De-ci, de-là

Ernest Chausson
La nuit

Henri Duparc
La fuite

Roger Quilter
Love calls through the summer night

Eric Coates
Bird songs at eventide

Francis Poulenc
Les chemins d'amour

George Gershwin
The man I love

Richard Rodgers
Bewitched, bothered and bewildered

Kurt Weill
September song

Richard Rodgers
People will say we're in love

Sunday 12 April

Sun 12 April, 10am–12.30pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Festival Masterclass I ⑥

with **Bernarda Fink**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

We are honoured to welcome acclaimed mezzo-soprano, Bernarda Fink, to work with our Leeds Song Young Artists in several masterclasses during the Festival. One of the most sought-after singers of her time and celebrated for her musical versatility, she has performed in the world's most prestigious concert halls and opera houses and has amassed a discography of over 50 recordings. In this first masterclass of the Festival, Bernarda Fink will offer her experience and expertise to Leeds Song Young Artists, duos selected from across the globe.

Sunday 12 April

Sun 12 April, 2–3pm
ROYAL ARMOURIES MUSEUM

Lunchtime Recital ⑦

'Dowland 400'

'If I could shut the gate against my thoughts': an exploration of melancholy

Nardus Williams soprano
Elizabeth Kenny lute

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

A number of standing tickets in the gallery will be available free of charge on the day to museum visitors and will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. Ticket holders are asked to remain for the duration of the performance.

Soprano Nardus Williams and lutenist Elizabeth Kenny join Leeds Song in an intimate recital designed to mark the 400th anniversary of the death of John Dowland, performed in the remarkable setting of the Royal Armouries Museum.

Winner of the Rising Talent award at the 2022 International Opera Awards, and praised for her "magnetism", Nardus Williams has been described as "a knockout combination of melting vulnerability and lustrous ardour" (*The Times*). Williams excels in recital, concert and operatic performances in venues in the UK and abroad and it's a real thrill to invite her back to Leeds Song for her first full-length recital with us. Elizabeth Kenny is one of the world's leading lute players and an academic, with a history of performing with many of the major early music ensembles and a back catalogue of celebrated recordings that show her to be a master of versatility and imaginative collaborations.

Please note that this performance takes place during in a room which is part of a public space open to museum visitors.

© Bertie Watson

John Danyel
If I could shut the gate against my thoughts

John Dowland
Flow my tears

Robert Johnson
Come, heavy sleep

John Dowland
Now cease my wand'ring eyes

Robert Johnson
Have you seen the bright lily grow?

Lucrezia Vizzana
O Magnum Mysterium

Francesca Caccini
Non so se quel sorriso

John Dowland
Can she excuse my wrongs

Nicholas Lanier
Qual musico gentil

Giulio Caccini
Alme luci beate

Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger
Toccata

Francesca Caccini
Lasciatemi qui solo

Claudio Monteverdi
Si dolce è'l tormento

Barbara Strozzi
Lagrime mie

Sun 12 April, 4–5.30pm
RECITAL ROOM, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Study Event: Exploring folk music in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ⑧

with **Richard Stokes**
and **Leeds Song Young Artists**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Leeds Song Patron and Professor of Lieder at the Royal Academy of Music, Richard Stokes, returns to Leeds Song to give one of his enlightening lecture recitals with song performances by Leeds Song Young Artists, focusing on varied settings of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* by Mahler, Schumann, Strauss, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky and Weber.

Sun 12 April, 6–7pm
ROOFTOP BAR, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Friends' Private Reception ⑨

A special 'Thank you!' for members of the Friends of Leeds Song

Tickets FREE to the Friends of Leeds Song (please book in advance)

Without the support of the Friends of Leeds Song, we simply wouldn't be able to fill the city with song. Why not join today and access a range of benefits including priority booking and invitations to special events? Please see page 27 for further details.

Sun 12 April, 6.30–7pm **THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE**

Pre-concert Talk ⑩ with Richard Stokes

Tickets FREE (please book in advance)

Richard Stokes, song pedagogue and expert linguist, takes to the stage in advance of the evening recital to present an introduction to this rich and emotionally powerful selection of French song, and to Mahler's deeply moving *Kindertotenlieder* cycle.

Sunday 12 April

Sun 12 April, 7.30pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Evening Recital ⑪

Marianne Crebassa mezzo-soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

Tickets £28, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Mezzo-soprano Marianne Crebassa has enjoyed a spectacular rise on the international music stage with celebrated performances in opera, concert and recital the world over, and we are fortunate to welcome her in what is her first UK recital outside of London. Her recital recordings have won her a plethora of accolades, including a Gramophone Award and together with Middleton she has performed at Wigmore Hall, Berlin Philharmonie and Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela. Their programme for Leeds Song is a sumptuous and stirring programme of French song including works by Debussy, Mompou and Ravel, as well as Mahler's intense and poignant cycle *Kindertotenlieder* which sets Rückert's grief-stricken texts.

"[Marianne Crebassa] brought an extraordinary and riveting ability to communicate through her voice... this wasn't just a faultless performance by Crebassa – it was one which drew you in from the very first note." (*Opera Today*)

Claude Debussy
Trois chansons de Bilitis
La fille aux cheveux de lin

Gustav Mahler
Kindertotenlieder

Claude Debussy
Bruyères

Federico Mompou
Combat del somni

Maurice Ravel
Cinq mélodies populaires grecques

© Simon Fowler

Monday 13 April

Mon 13 April, 10am–1pm
LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Friends' Festival Masterclass II ⑫

with **Bernarda Fink**

Tickets FREE to the Friends of Leeds Song (please book in advance)

As a special thank you to the Friends of Leeds Song, this masterclass is an opportunity to get up close to the action and meet our Young Artists as they prepare new material under the expert guidance of renowned mezzo-soprano, Bernarda Fink. She brings a wealth of knowledge to a group of duos at the very beginning of their musical careers, helping them to navigate their way through repertoire old and new.

Mon 13 April, 2–5pm
LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Friends' Festival Masterclass III ⑬

with **Mark Padmore CBE**

Tickets FREE to the Friends of Leeds Song (please book in advance)

A special event for the Friends of Leeds Song, renowned English tenor Mark Padmore shares his wisdom and expertise from the recital, concert and operatic stage as he leads members of our Young Artists Programme in the discovery and exploration of song repertoire.

Tuesday 14 April

Tue 14 April, 10am–1pm
LINACRE STUDIO,
HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Festival Masterclass IV (14)

with **Bernarda Fink**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Join distinguished mezzo-soprano, Bernarda Fink, as she offers our Young Artists further insight and encouragement in their learning of song repertoire.

Tue 14 April, 6–8pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Evening Recital (15)

'Haiku'

Roderick Williams OBE baritone
Iain Burnside piano

Tickets £28, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Leeds Song favourite Roderick Williams is joined by former Artistic Director Iain Burnside to present a programme themed around Japanese haiku, featuring new works by Libby Larsen set to première in 2026. Larsen's delicate settings of haiku are interwoven with thematically related songs, old and new, creating a rich tapestry of musical and poetic connections. As Williams describes, the links between songs may be poetic, musical, contrasting, or sympathetic—encouraging free association. He likens Larsen's short songs to a mobile, suspended around the central theme of displacement, from which other musical "threads" extend. Williams has selected additional songs from his repertoire to follow these threads, inviting listeners to form their own associations and connections, allowing the fragile beauty of the programme to evolve and expand.

© Theo Williams

SERENDIPITY

Libby Larsen
IKURU MI NI GESENU KOTO OOKU NATSU-HOSHI HIKARU
For the living
many incomprehensible
incidents
summer stars shine

Franz Schubert
Die Sterne

Francis Poulenc
Jacques Villon

Gerald Finzi
Waiting both

SHE'S LEAVING HOME

Libby Larsen
HANARE BANARE NI WAKARE NO HI NO NATSU NO KUMO
Departure day
families leaving one by one
summer clouds

Ludwig van Beethoven
Leichte Segler in den Höhen

Franz Schubert
Abschied

Joan Trimble
My grief on the sea

FORCED TO SET SAIL

Libby Larsen
IKUSA KASHUU O OWARE SABAKU NO MIZUUMI NAMI TATANU HI
War forced us from California
No ripples this day
on desert lake

Franz Schubert
Meeres Stille

Elizabeth Lutyens
Refugee Song

CHILDREN CHASING DRAGONFLIES

Libby Larsen
HIZAKARI TOMBO OU KORA NO HA GA SHIROI
At midday
children chasing dragonflies
their teeth are white

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Das Kinderspiel

Carl Loewe
Der Zahn

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Silent noon

Francis Poulenc
Joan Mirò

Interval

NIGHT TRAINS

Libby Larsen
KISHA NO OTO KIKOYU NAGAKI YORUO SAMETE ORI
Hearing sound of train
AWAKE-
this endless night

Franz Schubert
Willkommen und Abschied

Benjamin Britten
Midnight on the Great Western

LEAVES ON THE TRACK

Libby Larsen
KISHA RERU O KISHIRU KOYOI OMOIDE ICHINEN NO AKIYO
Train rumbles on track
this night memories of
past year
autumn evening

Gabriel Fauré
Automne

Franz Liszt
Es rauschen die Winde

Muriel Herbert
Faintheart in a railway train

Francis Jackson
From a railway carriage

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Libby Larsen
FUYUYO WAGA KATA O TATAKU OTOKO NO IRO SHIROKU
Winter night
pale faced man
taps my shoulder

Franz Schubert
Der Doppelgänger

Ivor Gurney
Reconciliation

WHERE DO I DISCARD MY DREAMS?

Libby Larsen
AKETE HOSHI WA KIE YUME WA DOKO E SUTER
At daybreak
stars disappear
where do I discard my dreams?

Robert Schumann
Aus alten Märchen
winkt es

Franz Schubert
Nacht und Träume

María Grever
What a difference a day makes

Tuesday 14 April

Tue 14 April, 9pm
THE ATTIC

Late Night Recital ⑯

Dunwich: An intermedia première by Martin Iddon

Rei Nakamura piano
Gillian Janes Lees speaker
Adam York Gregory videographer

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Doors and bar open from 8pm. Performance begins at 9pm.

Commissioned for the 2026 Festival, *Dunwich* is a new work by British composer and Professor of Music and Aesthetics at the University of Leeds Martin Iddon, created in collaboration with pianist Rei Nakamura, speaker Gillian Jane Lees, and videographer Adam York Gregory.

Described as a "song cycle without a singer," it's written for speaker, piano, video, and fixed media, and takes its name from Dunwich — the once-thriving port now lost to the sea and often called "Britain's Atlantis." Steeped in ghost stories and legend, the piece draws on this rich history of disappearance and memory. We're proud to present this innovative commission as part of our commitment to expanding the living tradition of song.

THE ATTIC

Wednesday 15 April

Wed 15 April, 5–7pm
BRODRICK HALL, LEEDS CITY MUSEUM

Composers & Poets Forum Showcase and Exhibition:

'A Leeds Songbook' ⑰

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

"... 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 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.

LEEDS city MUSEUM

LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE CELEBRATING SIXTY YEARS

Wednesday 15 April

Wed 15 April, 8pm
LEFT BANK LEEDS

Evening Recital ⑱

'Knight's Dream'

Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano
Sholto Kynoch piano

Tickets £25, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston and pianist Sholto Kynoch present a programme celebrating Heinrich Heine's vivid poetry and the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination in life and love. At its heart is *Dichterliebe*, Schumann's 1840 song cycle drawn from Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, alongside *Knight's Dream* – a 2023 BBC Radio 3 commission by Héloïse Werner, alumna of the Leeds Song Young Artists Programme, written as a contemporary companion piece.

Heine's poetry anchors the programme, guiding us from the 19th to the 21st century through works by Josephine Lang, Carl Loewe, and Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn, each offering a unique take on Heine's concise and evocative texts. Werner's imaginative setting closes the programme – part homage, part playful dialogue with both Schumann and Heine—bringing past and present into lyrical conversation.

"With supremely sensitive playing from Kynoch, Charlston made us struggle with her over all these emotional hurdles in a superb performance, both exhausting and elating."
(*The Guardian* Oct 2023)

Clara Schumann
Sechs Lieder (Op. 13)

Fanny Hensel
Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam

Felix Mendelssohn
Auf flügeln des Gesanges

Robert Schumann
Die Lotosblume

Carl Loewe
Die Lotosblume

Fanny Hensel
Schwanenlied

Josephine Lang
Wenn zwei von einander scheiden

Felix Mendelssohn
Reiselied

Interval

Héloïse Werner
Knight's Dream
Commissioned by BBC Radio 3 for the artists in 2023

Robert Schumann
Dichterliebe

LEFT BANK

Thursday 16 April

Thu 16 April, 12–1.30pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Young Artists Showcase ⑲

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Your opportunity to enjoy the finest young duos of the Leeds Song Young Artist Programme, coached over the week by Sir Thomas Allen, Bernarda Fink, Mark Padmore, Roger Vignoles, Anna Tilbrook, Scott Brooksbank and others.

Alumni from the Leeds Lieder masterclasses include such stars as Nicky Spence and Elizabeth Watts, and the most recent prize-winners at the Kathleen Ferrier Awards have come directly from our stable. Come and enjoy the next generation of Lieder singers and pianists!

Thu 16 April, 3–6pm
LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Festival Masterclass V ⑳

with **Sir Thomas Allen**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Appearances by the legendary Sir Thomas Allen are always special occasions at Leeds Song. He appeared as Guest of Honour in 2018 and his frequent masterclasses for us have confirmed his reputation in Leeds as one of the most knowledgeable, affable, witty and insightful teachers. We are thrilled that he returns once more to Yorkshire to steer our Leeds Song duos through their chosen repertoire.

Thursday 16 April

Thu 16 April, 6.30–7pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Pre-concert Talk (21) with Dr Katy Hamilton

Tickets FREE (please book in advance)

Dr Katy Hamilton, researcher, writer and presenter, returns to Leeds Song to shed light on tonight's evening recital, giving an introductory talk which will be both informative and enlightening.

Thu 16 April, 7.30pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Evening Recital (22)
Seven Deadly Sins Cabaret

Axelle Fanyo soprano
Fleur Barron mezzo-soprano
Julius Drake piano

Tickets £25, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Two powerhouse voices—Grammy Award-winning soprano Axelle Fanyo and electrifying mezzo-soprano Fleur Barron—join internationally acclaimed pianist Julius Drake for a bold and theatrical journey through the Seven Deadly Sins.

From the biting wit of Weill and the sensual charm of Ravel, to Broadway flair and the dark drama of Schoenberg, this eclectic programme spans art song, cabaret, and musical theatre. Mahler, Poulenc, Bernstein, Sondheim—and more—performed with fierce artistry and flair.

Seven sins. Countless thrills. One unforgettable evening.

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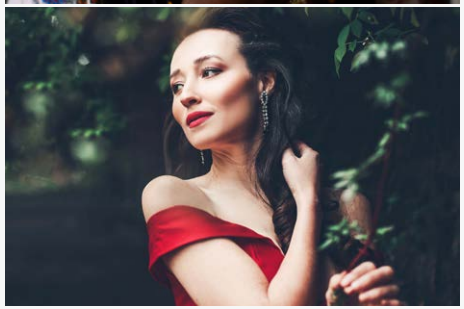

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Evening Recital programme

PRIDE

Gustav Mahler
Lob des hohen Verstands

Kurt Weill
Stolz (*Die sieben Todsünden*)

Maurice Ravel
Le paon (*Histoires Naturelles*)

Margaret Bonds
I, too

LUST

Kurt Weill
Unzucht (*Die sieben Todsünden*)

Francis Poulenc
Violon

Cy Coleman
Lost and Found (*City of Angels*)

Rita Strohl
La nuit

Alexander von Zemlinsky
Empfängnis
Entbietung

ENVY

Franz Schubert
An die Laute

Jean Sibelius
Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte

Charles Ives
Ich grolle nicht

Kurt Weill
Je ne t'aime pas

Johannes Brahms
Die Schwestern

Irving Berlin
Anything you can do, I can do better (*Annie get your gun*)

Interval

GREED

Cole Porter
Who wants to be a millionaire (*High Society*)

Arnold Schoenberg
Aus dem Spiegel von Arkadien

André Messager
J'ai deux Amants (*L'Amour Masqué*)

WRATH

Arnold Schoenberg
Warnung

Kurt Weill
Surabaya Johnny (*Happy End*)

Manuel de Falla
Polo

SLOTH

Stephen Sondheim
The Girls of Summer

Claude Debussy
C'est l'extase langoureuse

Maurice Ravel
L'indifférent

Erik Satie
Le chapelier

GLUTTONY

Kurt Weill
Alabama Song (*Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*)

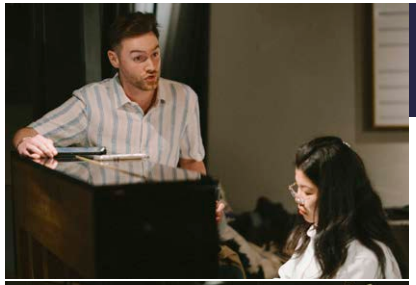
Franz Schubert
Trinklied

Leonard Bernstein
Rabbit at top speed

William Bolcom
Lime Jell-O Marshmallow Cottage Cheese Surprise

Cole Porter
The tale of the oyster (*Fifty Million Frenchmen*)

George Gershwin
I got rhythm (*Girl Crazy*)



Thu 16 April, 9.45–11pm
KINO @ HAR

Late Night Lieder Lounge (23)
with **Leeds Song Young Artists**

Tickets Pay what you like at the door. No booking required

Join us in the Howard Assembly Room's Kino Bar for an informal late-evening session of song and poetry presented by our Leeds Song Young Artists. Expect everything from Schubert to Sondheim, Dvořák to Disney.

Friday 17 April

© Ben Ealovega

Fri 17 April, 10am–12.30pm
LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Festival Masterclass VI (24)

with **Roger Vignoles**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Established as one of the world's leading song pianists, Roger Vignoles makes a very welcome return to Leeds Song. His outstanding pianism and encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire makes him a much sort-after collaborator and teacher.

FRI 17 April, 1–2pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLEY ROOM

Lunchtime Recital (25)

Charles Cunliffe baritone
Jong Sun Woo piano

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

This lunchtime recital sees the return of two alumni of the Leeds Song Young Artists to the city. Fresh from his summer success at Glyndebourne as winner of the 2025 John Christie Award, Charles Cunliffe partners with pianist Jong Sun Woo, winner of the Pianist Prize at the Wigmore Hall/Bollinger International Song Competition 2024, in Schubert's enigmatic late masterpiece *Schwanengesang*.

Programme to include:

Beethoven
An die ferne Geliebte

Schubert
Heine settings from *Schwanengesang*
and selected English Songs

Fri 17 April, 3–6pm
LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE

Festival Masterclass VII (26)

with **Anna Tilbrook**

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Our Young Artists programme continues to go from strength to strength, with alumni now featuring on the world's great stages. Esteemed song pianist and teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, Anna Tilbrook, returns to Leeds to give the closing masterclass of the Festival.

Fri 17 April, 6.30–7pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Pre-concert Talk (27)

with **Mark Rogers**

Tickets FREE (please book in advance)

We are always pleased when the legacy of our Young Artists programme can be demonstrated in our concert and Festival programming. This evening, we welcome back one of our Young Artist alumni and rising-star American pianist, Mark Rogers to give an engaging and insightful pre-concert talk. Winner of the Prix de Mélodie at the Concours Nadia et Lilli Boulanger, and the audience and First prize at the Helmut Deutsch Lieder Competition, Mark is becoming well-established as a performer specializing in vocal and chamber music, and is also an acclaimed writer in his field, winning first prize from the Royal Philharmonic Society for his article on Samuel Barber in their Young Classical Writers competition.

Friday 17 April

FRI 17 April, 7.30pm
HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM

Evening Recital ㉘

Katharina Konradi soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

Tickets £25, £10 (unwaged/disabled),
FREE (U30/students)

Katharina Konradi returns to Leeds following her knockout performance last year. Joined by pianist Joseph Middleton, she presents a programme of French, Russian, and German songs she has truly made her own. Together, they weave a rich tapestry of Romantic repertoire, exploring themes of love, longing, nature, and reflection, with moments of drama, intimacy, reverence, and lyrical beauty.

A regular on the operatic stage at the Bayerische, Wiener and Hamburg Staatsoper as well as major concert halls throughout Europe, Konradi is praised for her "crystal clear soprano" and "dazzling vocal technique" and along with Middleton is sure to provide an evening of typically emotive and nuanced song interpretation.

© Tom Arber

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Six French Songs

Franz Schubert
Ellens Gesang I
Ellens Gesang II
Ellens Gesang III

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
At the ball
`Twas in early spring
Cradle song
Serenade

Interval

Franz Schubert
Heiß mich nicht reden
So laßt mich scheiden
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt

Franz Liszt
Elégie
S'il est un charmant gazon
Enfant, si j'étais roi
Oh! quand je dors

Franz Schubert
Auf dem Wasser zu singen
Litanei auf das Fest Allerseelen
Die junge Nonne
Der Musensohn

FRI 17 April, 9.45–11pm
KINO @ HAR

Late Night Recital ㉙

Arko Mukhaerjee singer
Nishad Pandey guitar

Tickets £8, £4 (unwaged/disabled),
FREE (U30/students)

Inspired by the Eurovision Song Contest, five leading art song festivals – LIEDBasel, Heidelberger Frühling, Liedstadt, Schubertíada, and Leeds Song – joined forces in 2025 to launch the first Art Song Challenge. This initiative invited artists across Europe to submit innovative, interdisciplinary, and unconventional approaches to art song, with the goal of making the genre more accessible. Winners were selected from a large pool of entries through online auditions.

Join us at the Howard Assembly Room's Kino Bar to experience performances by Leeds Song's winners: Arko & Nishad blend folk, tribal and classical music from the South Asian subcontinent with contemporary influences – jazz, African folk, pop and beyond – revealing the eclecticism of modern India in high resolution.

Arko Mukhaerjee's intoxicating voice interlocks and interweaves with Nishad Pandey's expressive guitar playing, to create a dynamic and multi-dimensional sound, taking the audience on a journey of twists and turns, inviting them to experience the full spectrum of human emotions. The duo's unique take on folk and traditional songs from India and around the world, rich with improvisation and spontaneous interaction, tells a captivating story of human migration and cultural cross-pollination.

Saturday 18 April

Sat 18 April, 11am–12pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Coffee Recital (30)

'Mortal Wounds'

Theodore Platt baritone
Keval Shah piano

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

"Daß ich trag' Todeswunden, das ist der Menschen Tun" (Justinus Kerner)

Inspired by a line from Robert Schumann's *Kerner-Lieder*, this programme is a meditation on human suffering, with a particular focus on the innocent child victims of conflict. From the bombing of the Basque village of Guernica to racist attacks in African American churches, to the horrors of Nazi occupation in France, this concert speaks of fascism, racism, and injustice, at the same time following the search for freedom, and putting forward a faith in the endurance of the human spirit.

Rising British-Russian baritone Theodore Platt, celebrated for his 'warm and powerful English baritone' is one of opera's most promising young voices. He is a recent laureate of the Concours international de Montréal and recipient of the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship. And to join him, we welcome back to Leeds alumnus of the Leeds Song Young Artist programme, and now Lecturer of Lieder at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, pianist Keval Shah. Shah's career is marked by his innovative approach to classical music and his ability to bridge cultural and social divides through his performances.

James Macmillan
The children

Joaquin Turina
El arbol de Guernica
(*2 Danzas sobre temas populares espanolas*)

Robert Schumann
from *Kerner-Lieder*
Erstes Grün
Sehnsucht nach der Waldgegend
Auf das Trinkglas eines verstobenen Freundes
Wer machte dich so krank?

Francis Poulenc
La fraîcheur et le feu

Shawn E. Okpebholo
Two Black Churches

Ilse Weber
Wiegala

Richard Farina arr. Will Liverman
Birmingham Sunday

Margaret Bonds
The negro speaks of rivers

Florence Price
My dream

Sat 18 April, 2–3.30pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Young Artists Finale Concert (31)

Tickets £15, £5 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

Come and support the outstanding singers and pianists who have been part of our Young Artists Programme and who immersed themselves in song over the course of the past week in Leeds. If past years are to go by, the standard will be extremely high, the repertoire eclectic and the buzz electric.

Sat 18 April, 6–6.30pm
THE ROOFTOP BAR, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Pre-concert Talk (32)

with **Dr George Kennaway**

Tickets FREE (please book in advance)

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

Sat 18 April, 7pm
THE VENUE, LEEDS CONSERVATOIRE

Festival Closing Recital (33)

'Kathleen's Songbook'

Dame Sarah Connolly mezzo-soprano
Joseph Middleton piano

with winners of Northern Aldborough Festival's New Voices Singing Competition 2025
Rachel Munro soprano
Jia Ning Ng piano

Tickets £28, £10 (unwaged/disabled), FREE (U30/students)

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 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.

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

Dame Sarah Connolly & Joseph Middleton

Mozart
Abendempfindung

Schubert
An die Musik
Ganymed
Die junge Nonne

Robert Schumann
Widmung

Clara Schumann
Liebst du um Schönheit

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

Interval

Duparc
Extase
L'invitation au voyage
Chanson triste

Rebecca Clarke
The lost nightingale

John Ireland
Earth's call

Frank Bridge
Come to me in my dreams

Ernest John Moeran
Twilight

Ivor Gurney
Thou didst delight my eyes
Sleep

Benjamin Britten
Sephestia's lullaby

Mahler
Urlicht
Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Rachel Munro & Jia Ning Ng

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

Crumb
3 Early Songs

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

And finally, if you would like to experience some of the fruits of the work of Leeds Song's inspirational education projects, come along to our Schools Culmination concerts:

Friday 14 November 2025
& Friday 27 March 2026
THE BALLROOM, PUDSEY CIVIC HALL

School Culmination Concerts

Living Lieder 11am–12pm
Discovering Lieder 1.30–2.30pm

These two concerts round off our award-winning education projects, bringing the joys of song to thousands of school children every year.

The **Living Lieder** project sees our team including a singer, pianist and a poet, visit secondary schools to work with participants who learn a song from the Lieder canon. Focusing on good performance technique, they explore the text of the song by composing their own response.

Discovering Lieder is a 45-minute recital designed to follow a workshop session which has been taken into participating primary schools by our team of animateurs. It feels just like a regular Lieder recital with the usual composers and languages, but there's a surprise finale as each school performs its very own verse of Schubert's 'Das Wandern'.

These culmination concerts are a joyful sharing of the transformative power of music and a celebration of bringing new audiences into the wonderful world of Art Song!

For more information about our Learning and Participation Programme, please visit: www.leeddssong.com/learning

Tickets: Book in advance by calling the Leeds Song office on 0113 243 4438 or emailing info@leedssong.com. Tickets are subject to availability and allocated on a first come first served basis.

Friends of Leeds Song

The Friends of Leeds Song play a vital role in supporting the work of the organisation.

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 at 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.

How to book

The Opera North Box Office is the Festival Box Office for all events. You can find full festival booking information, and links to the Box Office via **www.leedssong.com/whats-on**

To contact the Opera North Box Office directly, please visit:
Online: **www.operanorth.co.uk/whats-on**
Telephone: **0113 223 3600** Mon–Fri, 12–6pm
In-person: Mon–Fri, 12–6pm, or one hour before a concert.

Please note that Leeds Song cannot access the Box Office, and therefore all bookings of new tickets, or queries about tickets you already have booked should go directly to the Opera North Box Office

Tickets go on general sale on **Thursday 23 October at midday**
Priority booking for Friends from **Thursday 16 October at midday**

2026 Festival Discount

Receive 10% off your order if you purchase 4-6 festival tickets, 12.5% off if you purchase 7-10 tickets and 15% off if you purchase over 11 tickets. This offer is limited to paid events only, and valid for a maximum of two tickets per event. The discount only applies for orders made in one single transaction.

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3 Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7PD
www.leedsconservatoire.ac.uk/visit-us

HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM
KINO BAR
HOWARD OPERA CENTRE
32 New Briggate, Leeds LS1 6NU
www.operanorth.co.uk/howard-assembly-room/plan-your-visit

LINACRE STUDIO, HOWARD OPERA CENTRE
8 Harrison St, Leeds LS1 6PA
www.operanorth.co.uk/howard-assembly-room/plan-your-visit

BRODRICK HALL, LEEDS CITY MUSEUM
Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 8BH
www.museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-city-museum

LEFT BANK LEEDS
Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ
www.leftbankleeds.org.uk/contact

THE ATTIC
3 Sheaf Street, Leeds LS10 1HD
www.instagram.com/theatticleeds
Parking available on Sheaf St and Hunslet Rd

THE BALLROOM, PUDSEY CIVIC HALL
Dawsons Corner, Cote Lane, Pudsey LS28 5TA
www.conferenceleeds.co.uk/search-a-venue/pudsey-civic-hall/

Programmes and translations

Please note that, in alignment with our commitment to sustainability, daily programmes with texts and translations will only be available online at the Leeds Song website in April: www.leedssong.com

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.

Leeds Song

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