



EVENT PROGRAMME

INTERNATIONAL
CONCERT SERIES
2025-2026

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

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MUSIC/EVENTS**





DISCOVER **VOX HUMANA: THE 2025-26 INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. A YEAR OF WORLD-CLASS MUSIC DEDICATED TO THE POWER OF THE HUMAN VOICE, CONTINUING A CELEBRATED VOCAL TRADITION THAT BEGAN IN 1886.**

This season, curated by Dr Nathan James Dearden in his 10th year, celebrates two major milestones: the 20th anniversary of Rupert Gough as Director of Choral Music, whose leadership has shaped the acclaimed Choir of Royal Holloway, defining choral excellence at the university, and the upcoming launch of the Choral Academy in May 2026. This legacy inspires a diverse programme - from intimate solo song, transcriptions for violin, guitar, to soprano saxophone, to dramatic scenas, orchestral vocalise, folk explorations, and the collective power of choral music - showcasing the breadth and depth of the human voice.

THE ART OF SONG (AND MORE)

We are proud to continue our partnerships with the London Mozart Players and the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT), and to welcome world-class artists including the sublime soprano Ruby Hughes, pianist Huw Watkins, the ground-breaking Emily Francis Trio, and the peerless vocal ensemble VOCES8. The series also shines a light on the phenomenal rising stars of our time: saxophonist Rob Burton, pianist Mark Rogers, Duo Melus, and American mezzo-soprano Hayley Meth.

CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

Most proudly, we provide a platform for our own extraordinary alumni, welcoming back trad singer and uilleann piper Seb Stone, operatic tenor Thomas Elwin, and debut the exciting new vocal choir, Omnium Ensemble, under the direction of Olivia Earl.

The 2025-26 International Concert Series at Royal Holloway promises an exciting line-up of world-class performances, showcasing renowned musicians and rising talents from around the globe, and the community of students and researchers right here at the University. Set within our stunning campus, the series brings together a wide range of genres, from classical and jazz to contemporary and global music, offering something for every taste.

We look forward to welcoming you and showcasing the exceptional musical life that makes Royal Holloway so special.

Dr Nathan James Dearden

Curator of the International Concert Series and Arts Festivals



EVENT PROGRAMME

LOVE SONGS FOR THE BROKEN

Thursday, 16 October 2025, 8.00pm

Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Rob Burton Saxophone

Mark Rogers Piano

EVENT REPERTOIRE

Marina Dranishnikova (1929-1994)

Poem (arr. soprano saxophone and piano)

Nathan James Dearden (b.1992)

love songs for the broken (World Premiere; version for saxophone and piano)

Mark-Anthony Turnage (b.1960)

Two Elegies Framing a Shout

Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012)

Ballad in Memory of Shirley Horn

Chick Corea (1941-2021; arr. Rob Buckland)

Children's Songs (No. 6, 19, 7)

There will be no interval during this evening's event

Estimated event finish time: 9.00pm

Please no flash photography or visual/audio recording throughout the event.

For news about our future events, please visit royalholloway.ac.uk/music/events

PROGRAMME NOTES

MARINA DRANISHNIKOVA (1929-1994)

Poem (arr. soprano saxophone and piano)

Marina Dranishnikova originally composed her work *Poem* for oboe and piano in 1953. Although she was a talented pianist and composer, little is known about her musical endeavours, and *Poem* is the only known and published piece attributed to her. She came from an extremely musical family; her father, Vladimir Dranishnikov, was a conductor and composer who served as music director at the Mariinsky Theatre in Leningrad (the former name for St. Petersburg) and was a contemporary of Sergei Prokofiev.

The scarcity of information about her career is likely a result of several factors: Dranishnikova lived in the Soviet Union in the mid-20th century, a period when many composers, especially women, had limited opportunities for recognition. This leaves much of her musical story a mystery.

The piece is an intimate duet, reflecting the complexities of love and loss. It is said to have been dedicated to Vladimir Mikhailovich Kurlin, the principal oboist of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom Dranishnikova reportedly had a tragic romance that ended with his early death. Little is documented about their relationship, but shortly after his passing, she withdrew from public life. While some have speculated that personal heartbreak contributed to her own untimely death, there is no evidence to confirm this.

The poignancy of “Poem,” coupled with its dedication, makes the work all the more moving. Through this single published composition, Dranishnikova offers a glimpse into her emotional world, leaving listeners with a hauntingly beautiful testament to love and loss.

This evening we will hear an arrangement of this work for soprano saxophone and piano.

NATHAN JAMES DEARDEN (B.1992)

love songs for the broken (World Premiere; version for saxophone and piano)

1. joy reappears (after Kari Edwards)

2. i will not comb my hair (after Hitomaro)

3. I'm standing in a bath tub (after Frank O'Hara)

4. Feet! feet! (after Frank O'Hara)

These 'songs' for soprano saxophone and string ensemble gives voice to the queer love story - be it one of passion, absurdity, repentance, or sorrow. Each short movement takes its name from a poem written by a queer poet from history, illustrating the often hidden and secret love of queer people. From seeing a sunlit lover in bed Kari Edwards' [the day shifts...], to young love and the despair of rejection in Frank O'Hara's 'Mayakovsky'.

The one exception being that of 7th-century, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, where we have no idea whether he was queer but the fluidity and universality in his haiku has always spoken to me. Although initially set out as being a 'concerto' for saxophone, this work has developed into a series of snapshots into the intimacy and crystalline effervescence of the soprano saxophone.

This evening we will hear the World Premiere performance of this version of *love songs for the broken* for soprano saxophone and piano.

Composer's Note © Nathan James Dearden

MARK-ANTHONY TURNAGE (B.1960)

Two Elegies Framing a Shout

Two Elegies Framing a Shout, composed in 1994, takes its title from the piece's structure: two expressive elegies separated by a central "shout" section. Turnage stated that the two elegies were dedicated to his loved ones, with the second elegy drawing on material from *Junior Addict* - another of his pieces taken from the larger work *Blood on the Floor*,

which itself was written as a memorial to his brother. Grief is a poignant theme in much of his work, as in *Cortège for Chris*, another piece for woodwind and piano, but here with the addition of a cello in honour of Christopher Van Kampen of the Nash Ensemble and London Sinfonietta.

In *Two Elegies Framing a Shout*, Elegy No. 1 is scored solely for saxophone, allowing the instrument to shine by demonstrating a variety of tone colours, expressions, and textures. The piano joins only for the rambunctious "shout" and the final Elegy No. 2.

RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT (1936-2012)

Ballad in Memory of Shirley Horn

Composed in 2005 for piano and clarinet, *Ballad* is dedicated to the American jazz musician Shirley Horn, who died that year at the age of 71. In a work that pays homage to Horn's talent not just as a singer but also as a pianist, Bennett's composition demonstrates a deep love and understanding of the nuances of jazz harmony and melodic writing, as well as a tender appreciation for woodwind.

Originally commissioned for the clarinettist Nigel Hinson, who also gave the work's world premiere in 2008, *Ballad* has been performed by several renowned instrumentalists on both clarinet and saxophone. Beginning at a slow tempo with a series of elegiac passages, the piece takes the listener on a journey through various emotional states via abrupt changes of tempo, rhythm, and style, with a quasi-cadenza in the middle adding technical and creative flair. The piece ends with a tranquil, almost Debussy-like series of chords in the piano over sustained notes in the saxophone, bringing this sweeping eulogy to a close.

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett was one of the most influential and highly regarded British composers of the 20th century, with a prolific output of over 200 concert pieces and 50 film scores spanning multiple genres, including jazz, classical, and serialism. Himself a jazz pianist, Bennett was a regular performer at some of London's most prestigious venues, including The Pheasantry and Ronnie Scott's.

CHICK COREA (1941-2021; ARR. ROB BUCKLAND)

Children's Songs (No. 6, 19, 7)

Chick Corea was an American jazz pianist, composer, and bandleader. Trained in classical piano at Juilliard, he dropped out to focus on performing, and in the late 60s he toured with the great jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis. His playing can be heard on some of Davis's most celebrated albums, including *In a Silent Way* and *On the Corner*. Corea's own studio albums are highly respected in the jazz world, with his song "Windows" especially heralded as a jazz standard.

The three pieces on tonight's programme are arrangements from his 1984 album *Children's Songs*, which consists of 20 short pieces plus an addendum for violin, cello, and piano. The album mixes jazz piano with classical technique and elements of folk music. Reminiscent of Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, the pieces capture a wide emotive landscape despite their brevity. It is in this synthesis that we can see the influence of 20th-century classical composers such as Bartók and Scriabin on Corea.

Song No. 6 is characterised by its rhythmic complexity, with cross-rhythms adding to its playful and spirited feel. Song No. 7 features a static left hand, dominated by a rocking motif, while much of the interest comes from the right hand's almost improvisatory manner. Song No. 19 provides an emotional contrast with its slower tempo and harmonic rhythm, reminiscent of the cool jazz of the 1950s. Corea said that in composing these pieces, he wished "to convey simplicity as beauty, as represented in the Spirit of a child."

OUR PROGRAMME NOTES

Unless otherwise stated, all of our programme notes have been written by a team of student volunteers enrolled onto the university's Concert Management & Artist Personnel Programme.

EVENT PERFORMERS

ROB BURTON SAXOPHONE



London-based saxophonist and artist Rob Burton won the Woodwind Category Final of BBC Young Musician 2018 and went on to secure a place in the Grand Final at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, where he performed as concerto soloist with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Highlights since then include appearances as soloist with some of the UK's leading orchestras, such as Britten Sinfonia and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra as well as at prestigious international festivals, including Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Leicester, Cheltenham, Harrogate, and Oundle International Festivals. Featured as one of Classic FM's "Rising Stars 2024: 30 under 30", he has performed in prestigious London venues, namely Wigmore Hall, St. John's Smith Square, St. James' Piccadilly, Buckingham Palace, and Windsor Castle.

Rob previously studied Classical Saxophone on a full scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music with Huw Wiggin, his master's degree at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK), and is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music on the prestigious Advanced Diploma degree, as the first ever saxophonist on this course. As an oil painter, Rob has spent time studying at the Barcelona Academy of Art and has appeared on Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year, where he was shortlisted for the semi-final.

Selected as a 2022 Rahn Kulturfonds scholarship winner and previous 'Making Music' artist, Rob is also a Vandoren UK artist. He is grateful for the support of YCAT's BBC Young Musician aftercare scheme, the Munster Trust, the Marianne und Curt Dienemann-Stiftung, and LSO Conservatoire Scholarships.

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MARK ROGERS

PIANO

Mark Rogers is an American pianist specializing in vocal and chamber music. He has been a Young Artist at the International Lied Festival Zeist, Leeds Lieder Festival, the Ludlow English Song Weekend, and has played for masterclasses with Christian Gerhaher, Martin Fröst, Felicity Lott, and Lawrence Power among others.

Together with regular recital partner baritone Florian Störtz, they won the Prix de Mélodie at the Concours Nadia et Lilli Boulanger and the audience and First prize at the Helmut Deutsch Lieder Competition. Mark performs recitals regularly with musicians on the Countess of Munster and Philharmonia schemes and has played concerts at Scottish Parliament, the Malmö Radhuset, and a series of recitals at Atelier Ferrandou in the south of France with cellist Kristian Chojecki. Previously, he was the accompanist for BBC Choir of the year Les Sirenes, and is a staff pianist at Oxenfoord summer school.

Mark is an alumnus of the Royal Academy of Music where he studied with James Baillieu, Malcolm Martineau, and Michael Dussek. was recently awarded the first prize in Art Song accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music and has previously been awarded the Alex Menzies Memorial prize and the Hester Dickson Lieder prize at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he completed his undergraduate studies with Graeme McNaught in 2021.

In addition to performing, he has won first prize from the Royal Philharmonic Society for his article on Samuel Barber in their Young Classical Writers competition, and writes program notes for the Wigmore Hall.

This event is presented as part of the International Concert Series 2025-26 - VOX HUMANA - at Royal Holloway.

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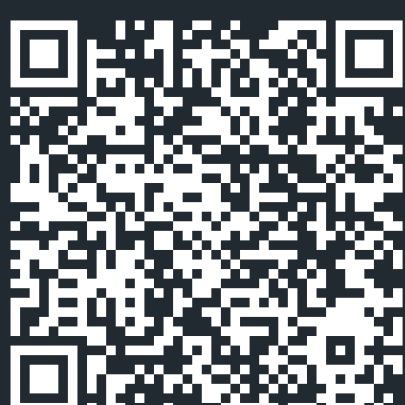


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INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES 2025-26 VOX HUMANA

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