



EVENT PROGRAMME

INTERNATIONAL
CONCERT SERIES
2025-2026

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

**ROYALHOLLOWAY.AC.UK/
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

YCAT PRESENTS...

Thursday, 6 November 2025, 8.00pm

Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Samrat Majumder Guitar

EVENT REPERTOIRE

Luis de Narváez (b. 1490, d. unknown)

Canción del Emperador

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Praeludium & Fantasia No. 7

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Three Songs;

The Earl of Essex, His Galliard ("Can She Excuse My Wrongs"),

Lachrimae Pavan ("Flow My Tears")

The Frog Galliard ("Now O Now I Needs Must Part")

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Prelude, Fugue and Allegro, BWV998

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Lob der Tränen (D. 711), Der Wanderer an den Mond (D.870), Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen (D.343)

Weng Ching-hsi (arr. R. Dyens)

The Moon Represents My Heart (月亮代表我的心)

Robert Burns (arr. Rabindranath Tagore)

Ye Banks and Braes, Phule Phule Dole Dole

Yoko Kanno (arr. Y. Koseki)

Hana wa Saku (花は咲く)

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

LUIS DE NARVÁEZ (B. 1490, D. UNKNOWN)

Canción del Emperador

Cancion del Emperador (Trans. 'Song of the Emperor') is an instrumental arrangement by Luys de Narváez of the chanson *Mille Regretz* (A Thousand Regrets). The song is often attributed to Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521), though its authorship is uncertain; of the two dozen 16th-century sources containing the piece, only two name Josquin, while most list it as anonymous. Despite this, *Mille Regretz* was profoundly influential, inspiring many later works that incorporated its poignant melodies. A notable example is Cristóbal de Morales's six-voice Missa *Mille Regretz*, which quotes the original tune in the Kyrie movement.

Narváez, the arranger, served as a composer and vihuelist (a player of the vihuela, a Spanish stringed instrument) in the royal chapel of King Philip II of Spain. The piece is a homage to King Philip's father, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, who was particularly fond of *Mille Regretz*. Narváez's arrangement retains the profound sadness of the original song - even without its lyrics - through mournful minor melodies and a calm, flowing tempo.

Cancion del Emperador is deeply rooted in the Spanish Renaissance and illustrates a key musical development of the era: the transformation of vocal music, which had dominated early music, into independent instrumental works.

JOHN DOWLAND (1563-1626)

Praeludium & Fantasia No. 7

John Dowland's *Praeludium*, composed in sixteenth-century England, exemplifies the transition from the Renaissance style to the Baroque. This is evident in Dowland's use of relaxed and expressive writing, which marked a significant departure from the balanced polyphony of the Renaissance.

His works were so impactful that he became known as an ‘emotional artist’ - a title earned not through physical art, but through the profound emotional power of his music.

Praeludium (also known as Fantasia No. 7) is characteristic of Dowland’s sombre and reflective style. Its free tempo provides space for listeners to absorb the emotion within and between phrases. Combined with the piece’s ambiguous harmonies, this creates a palpable sense of uncertainty and reflection, a mood further deepened by its descending bass line.

JOHN DOWLAND

Three Songs

The Earl of Essex, His Galliard ("Can She Excuse My Wrongs")

This galliard is taken from John Dowland’s 1597 collection, *Ayres of Foure Parties with Tableture for the Lute*. It is dedicated to Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, who was later executed for treason by Queen Elizabeth I. A galliard is typically a lively court dance, and this piece possesses the characteristic energetic rhythm. However, a poignant contrast emerges between this spirited music and the hurt and sorrow expressed in its lyrics, demonstrating Dowland’s masterful ability to convey complex emotion.

Lachrimae Pavan ("Flow My Tears")

Possibly Dowland’s most famous work, the *Lachrimae Pavan* originally existed as an instrumental piece. A pavan is a slow processional dance, and the music is built around a descending four-note pattern, often called the ‘falling tear motif.’ The piece is rife with sorrow and reflection, setting it apart from the more balanced and serene style typical of much Renaissance music.

The Frog Galliard ("Now O Now I Needs Must Part")

This piece is another lively dance. The "Frog" in the title is thought to refer to the Duke of Anjou, a French nobleman who courted Elizabeth I. In contrast to the heavy melancholic style for which Dowland is famous, this galliard adopts a lighter, more extroverted character. It represents the dance-loving, courtly side of Renaissance England, featuring ornamental

trills and mordents that embellish the melodic lines. The piece also employs a binary structure and polyphonic writing, hallmarks of the period's instrumental music.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Prelude, Fugue and Allegro, BWV998

Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E-flat Major, BWV 998, is a late work composed around 1735. Its original manuscript, bearing the title "Prelude pour la Luth. à Cembal. par J.S. Bach," highlights its unique dual identity, written for either lute or harpsichord. This very manuscript sold at Christie's in 2016 for £2,518,500, a testament to its enduring significance. For the guitar, this piece feels not like a transcription but a homecoming, perfectly suited to the instrument's polyphonic and resonant capabilities.

The **Prelude** shares the arpeggiated texture of many preludes in Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. Its flowing motion creates an improvisatory feel, which is momentarily suspended by a dramatic fermata over a rich, suspended chord - a moment of striking harmonic tension before the coda. Guitarists must nimbly navigate this texture, including a rare and intentional instance of consecutive fifths in what was the original left-hand part.

The **Fugue** is structurally remarkable. It is one of only three fugues Bach wrote in a strict ternary (ABA) form. The contrapuntally dense A section, with its elegant subject, frames a texturally contrasting and more improvisatory central episode. This architectural clarity provides a satisfying sense of closure, deviating from the more common fugal structure of continuous development.

The work concludes with a spirited Allegro in binary form. This movement functions like a lively Gigue, its perpetual motion of 16th-note passages creating a brilliant and joyful finale. As heard in celebrated interpretations by guitarists like Julian Bream, who famously broadcast it from Wardour Castle in 1978, the piece is often played in D major with a Drop D tuning, which enhances the guitar's resonance and lends the work a particularly majestic and powerful character.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Lob der Tränen (D. 711), Der Wanderer an den Mond (D.870),

Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen (D.343)

The first of this evening's three Schubert lieder, *Lob der Tränen* (Trans. 'In Praise of Tears'), sets a poem by August Wilhelm Schlegel.

Composed in 1818, the song features a lilting, Italianate melody - a style that contrasts with the composer's more mature works. This musical grace reflects the poem's own juxtaposition of smiles and tears.

However, a tension arises between the poem's profound philosophical content, which references the myth of Prometheus and the humanity found in tears, and Schubert's deliberately pretty and graceful setting.

The second piece, *Der Wanderer an den Mond* (Trans., 'The Wanderer's Address to the Moon'), is a setting of a poem by Johann Gabriel Seidl.

Composed in 1826, it was published a year later in a collection dedicated to Joseph Witteczek. The song musically embodies themes of travel, loneliness, and yearning for homeland - archetypal concerns of the German Romantic movement. One can easily imagine the song's solitary narrator as a companion to the figure in Caspar David Friedrich's iconic 1818 painting, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*.

The final song of the trio is *Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen* (Trans., 'Litany for the Feast of All Souls'). Another early work from 1816, it sets a poem by Johann Georg Jacobi. True to its title, the music is a reflective and tranquil elegy for those who have passed away. Schubert's gentle, swaying setting guides the listener through a range of emotions, while subtle chromaticism and minor inflections add a touch of Romantic pathos to the devotional text.

WENG CHING-HSI (ARR. R. DYENS):

The Moon Represents My Heart (月亮代表我的心)

Weng Ching-Hsi (1936–2012) was a Taiwanese composer born in Taipei. A self-taught jazz musician and conductor, he also wrote extensively for film and television, producing more than 80 film scores and numerous arrangements. He is best remembered for his songs, including *Story of a Small Town* and *The Moon Represents My Heart*.

This love ballad was first recorded in 1973 but was made famous by singer Teresa Teng in 1977. It became one of the first Chinese songs to gain international recognition following the Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong—a period during which Western influences were largely suppressed. The moon is a classic image in Chinese poetry, and the song reflects this tradition through the use of *tuō wù yán zhì* (「託物言志」, “using objects to express feelings”). Rather than declaring “I love you” directly, the speaker in *The Moon Represents My Heart* compares their love to the full moon. This recalls the 19th-century Japanese writer Natsume Sōseki, who suggested that in Japanese one does not say “I love you,” but rather, “The moon is beautiful, isn’t it?”

The version heard this evening, arranged by French guitarist Roland Dyens, features a highly ornamented melody line typical of Chinese folk music, alongside complex spread chords and strumming patterns that highlight the guitar’s virtuosity within what at first appears to be a simple tune.

ROBERT BURNS (ARR. RABINDRANATH TAGORE)

Ye Banks and Braes, Phule Phule Dole Dole

Ye Banks and Braes is the opening line of Robert Burns's 1791 song, "The Banks o' Doon," which was set to an older East Anglian folk tune. This same melody was later adopted by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) for his song "Phule Phule Dhole Dhole" (Flowers Swaying Gently). Both versions serve as an ode to the natural landscape: Burns's poem contrasts the beauty of the River Doon in Ayrshire with the melancholy of lost love, while Tagore's text describes flowers swaying in a cool breeze.

Musically, the piece is characteristic of Scottish folk tradition. The 6/8 time signature, the gentle rubato, and the use of syncopation, triplets, and dotted rhythms all contribute to its lilting, lyrical quality.

This arrangement for guitar is, above all, a celebration of this unique cultural collaboration - a Scottish poem set to an English tune, reimagined by an Indian poet, and now voiced through the strings of the guitar.

YOKO KANNO (ARR. Y. KOSEKI)

Hana wa Saku (花は咲く)

Yoko Kanno is a Japanese composer, arranger, and musician best known for her acclaimed anime soundtracks, including *Cowboy Bebop*. In 2012, she released the charity single *Flowers Will Bloom* following the devastating 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in eastern Japan.

The expressive melody tells a story of hope and new beginnings, symbolising the rebuilding of the Tohoku region after the disaster. Originally a pop ballad for piano and voice, this arrangement by Yoshihiro Koseki blends classical guitar with the contemporary pop style for which Kanno is renowned. The gentle instrumentation, together with the lyrical melodic contours, evokes the image of flowers opening in bloom - fitting tribute to those who were affected.

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



SAMRAT MAJUMDER **Guitar**

Samrat Majumder is a Scottish-Indian classical guitarist. He is currently studying for his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland under the guidance of Professor Manuel Barrueco. In May 2025, Samrat was announced as the inaugural Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) 40th Anniversary Artist at the YCAT International Final Auditions at Wigmore Hall, also becoming a joint YCAT-Concert Artists Guild (USA) Artist for 2025

During the 2025/26 season Samrat will perform throughout the UK culminating in a debut recital at the Wigmore Hall. He will also make his UK concerto debut with the de Havilland Orchestra playing Rodrigo's 'Concierto de Aranjuez'.

Samrat previously studied Konzertexamen at the Robert Schumann Hochschule, Düsseldorf, with Professor Alexander Ramirez, having also achieved a MMus from Royal Conservatoire in the Hague (cum laude) under the tutelage of Professor Enno Voorhorst and a BMus with First Class Honours from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) with Professor Allan Neave. Prior to higher education Samrat studied with Peter Stewart at the Junior School of the RCS.

A prolific prize winner, Samrat has won the first prizes at Concours International de Guitare d'Antony (inc. Audience prize) in 2025 and at Deutscher Gitarrenpreis, the International Martinez Guitar Competition Iserlohn and LIGITA International Guitar Competition in Lichtenstein in 2024. He was also the recipient of the Prix Savarez for the best interpretation of music by Johann Sebastian Bach as well as the second overall prize at the Koblenz International Guitar Competition in Germany in the same year. During his time at the RCS, Samrat was awarded the "Governors Recital Prize" for Strings in 2020.

One of Samrat's most meaningful projects is his work with young, aspiring, talented Indian classical guitarists. He runs a mentorship programme that offers select Indian classical guitarists regular lessons as well as opportunities to connect with Professors and Institutions in Europe with the prospect of them applying for higher education studies abroad in the future. Alongside this mentorship programme, Samrat is involved in the organisation of classical guitar events and festivals in India. From 2022 – 2024, Samrat worked as one of the festival directors of the "Art Guitar Festival Series" which ran for three consecutive years in Kolkata and Delhi. This festival featured concerts from international artists from Chile, Italy, USA, UK, Germany and India.

Samrat is the Classical Guitar Ambassador for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and D'Addario sponsored artist. Samrat performs with guitars made by renowned English luthier, Michael Gee and Martinez-Lazaro.



This event is presented as part of the International Concert Series 2025-26 - VOX HUMANA - at Royal Holloway, in collaboration with the Young Classical Artists Trust.

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