



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

INCANTATIONS: DUO MELUS

Thursday, 23 October 2025, 8.00pm

Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Katie Taunton Flute

Jack Redman Piano

EVENT REPERTOIRE

Nathan James Dearden (b. 1992)

someone is dancing us

William Mathias (1934-1992)

Sonatina for flute and piano

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Flute Sonata, FP164

Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Pièce for flute and piano, Op. 189

André Jolivet (1905-1974)

Chant de Linos

Stephen Goss (b.1964)

Six Welsh Folksongs

Paul Taffanel (1844-1908)

Grande Fantaisie on Themes from the Opera 'Mignon'

There will be no interval during this evening's event

Estimated event finish time: 9.15pm

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

NATHAN JAMES DEARDEN (B. 1992)

someone is dancing us

For some time, my most known music has been slow, delicate, and even soporific, so I wanted to dig into how I write liveliness into music. The one thing about my music tastes is that I grew up listening to EDM more than classical, and the primal sounds that thump or make us dance were my *in*. They still do.

This new work - *someone is dancing us* - is part inspired by the dance anthems of the 90s and 2000s that I love, the dances found in classical (from the Sarabande to Mathias' own Sonatina which is featured alongside the premiere performance), and Tiffany Higgins' *Dance, Dance, While the Hive Collapses*. It's a warp of influence. A mix of references. A short look at how dances form a big part of our psychology. How sometimes we want to let go? Or stand at the side of dance floor staring inwards? Or how, in life, we are often led into a sort-of dance we never wished for to begin with.

This work was commissioned by City Music Foundation for Duo Melus.

Composer's Note © Nathan James Dearden

WILLIAM MATHIAS (1934-1992)

Sonatina for flute and piano

1. Allegro

2. Andantino

3. Maestoso - Con moto ritmico

Composed in 1953 when William Mathias was just 19 and beginning his studies at the Royal Academy of Music, the Sonatina is a buoyant and

spirited work that brims with youthful enthusiasm. Over three decades later, in 1986, Mathias revisited and revised the piece to create the Sonatina for Flute and Piano, simplifying its textures and form to make it more concise and approachable while maintaining its original character.

Mathias was not only a composer but also an accomplished conductor and pianist, often performing and directing premieres of his own works. Born in Whitland, Dyfed, he first studied at the University College of Wales before continuing at the Royal Academy of Music. This foundation helped his career gain international recognition, and his music found enthusiastic audiences both in Britain and abroad.

The Sonatina opens with an energetic and rhythmically engaging movement whose two main themes return throughout the work, demonstrating its assimilable nature. The central Andante offers a haunting, lyrical contrast. In the final movement, Mathias reintroduces material from the opening, bringing the piece to a spirited and satisfying close. Throughout, its rhythmic vitality and melodic interest engage the listener, making the Sonatina both an entertaining and masterfully crafted work.

FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)

Flute Sonata, FP164

1. Allegro malinconico

2. Cantilena: Assez lent

3. Presto giocoso

Francis Poulenc, now considered one of the leading French composers of the 20th century, wrote in a relatively accessible musical style during a time of widespread atonality and experimentation.

Written in the winter of 1956 as a commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation at the U.S. Library of Congress, the sonata soon became a favourite of Poulenc's, a fact demonstrated by his choice to have it played at his own 60th birthday concert.

Poulenc first gained recognition as a member of Les Six, a group of

rebellious French composers who wanted to revive the restraint they believed had been lost in the emotionalism of Franck's music. Poulenc's own style embodies a quintessential French paradox, which he once summed up by saying, "I'm a melancholy person who loves to laugh - like all melancholy people." His music balances the tenderness of his melodic lyricism with a clarity of texture.

The sonata captures the duality of Poulenc's musical voice, alternating between melancholy and exuberance. The opening *Allegro malinconico* contrasts wistful lyricism with playful, rhythmic passages. The central movement unfolds an intimate and reflective line for the flute, while the final movement bursts with spirit and wit.

MEL BONIS (1858-1937)

Pièce for flute and piano, Op. 189

Rediscovered in recent years, Pièce, Op. 189 has helped bring more of Bonis's work to light for modern performers and audiences. Despite the limitations she faced as a woman in a male-dominated musical world, along with the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, she became a significant voice of French Romanticism. As a student of the Paris Conservatoire, Bonis achieved wider recognition later in life, becoming the first woman to sit on the board of the Society of Music Composers.

Though World War I hindered her public career, she continued to write sacred and educational music, leaving behind a wide variety of unpublished works. Due to the tireless efforts of her great-niece, Christiane Geliot, many of these forgotten scores have been brought to light, offering today's audiences a chance to listen to Bonis's poetic and skilfully crafted music.

Pièce, Op. 189 offers a fluid, romantic dialogue between the flute and piano, conveying a deep sensitivity. This work has been interpreted as a commentary on the difficulties she faced as a woman trying to balance her roles as a composer, a wife, and a mother.

ANDRÉ JOLIVET (1905-1974)

Chant de Linos

A leading figure of twentieth-century music, André Jolivet was a French composer greatly interested in the acoustics of sound and how to develop atonal musical languages, as well as the intersection of ancient and modern influences.

Composed in 1944 as a commission for the Solo de Concours of the Paris Conservatory, *Chant de Linos* was intended as a test for the students' technical and musical abilities.

The piece is based on the mythological musician Linus, who taught music to Orpheus and Heracles, reflecting Jolivet's fascination with rituals and primitive chants. This rich mythological background sets a mysterious and mythical tone for the piece. Jolivet described the work as an ancient Greek mourning chant consisting of laments interspersed with cries and dances.

Chant de Linos is influenced by a modal scale that harks to an ancient past, and although it is in one movement, it consists of several free-flowing musical sections. After the improvisatory introduction, there are four main sections featuring variations, contrasting meters, and changing tempos. The work offers a uniquely complicated weave of counterpoint and harmonies, as well as a wide range of flute techniques that demand exceptional virtuosity from the performer. As a result, *Chant de Linos* is considered a technical and expressive touchstone of the flute repertoire, due to its extraordinary challenges and emotional depth.

STEPHEN GOSS (B.1964)

Six Welsh Folksongs (arr.)

1. Dafydd y Gerreg Wen

2. Wrth fynd hefo Deio i Dywyn

3. Suo Gân

4. Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf

5. Lisa Lân

6. Hela'r Sgyfarnog

Stephen Goss is a Welsh composer, guitarist and academic. His music draws freely on several styles and genres and has been recorded on over a hundred albums by more than a dozen record labels. In 2008 he composed Six Welsh Folksongs, originally written for two guitars. He wrote the following note about his piece:

I tried to keep my settings uncluttered, so that the simple beauty and individual character of each folk song melody would not be lost. The 18th Century harpist and composer David Owen was known locally as Dafydd y Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock) after the farm near Morfa Bychan that was his home. According to folklore, Owen called for his harp as he lay on his deathbed and composed this haunting melody. The words were added a century later by John Ceiriog Hughes.

Lisa Lân (Fair Lisa) is a lover's lament for the Lisa. The heartsick lover asks Lisa to guide him to where she is, so that they may be reunited in death. In contrast Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf is a joyous love song dedicated to the white rose of summer. Suo Gân simply means lullaby, although this seemingly comforting melody is tinged with melancholy. Hela'r 'Sgyfarnog (Hunting the Hare) is a lively hunting song and Wrth fynd hefo Deio i Dywyn is all about a shopping trip to Tywyn (with Deio). (Stephen Goss, 2009)

PAUL TAFFANEL (1844-1908)

Grande Fantaisie on Themes from the Opera 'Mignon'

Paul Taffanel, a French flautist, conductor, and teacher, is regarded as the founder of the modern French school of flute playing. As Professor of Flute at the Paris Conservatory in the late 19th century, he introduced pedagogical reforms that profoundly influenced the flute's repertoire. Taffanel pioneered a new expressiveness, emphasizing tone quality and a light vibrato to reveal the flute's capacity for great emotional depth.

In 1874, he composed the *Mignon Fantasy*, based on four melodies from Ambroise Thomas's 1866 comic opera, *Mignon*. The opera's libretto was inspired by Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.

A typical comic farce, the story follows Mignon, a mysterious young woman rescued from gypsies by the noble student Wilhelm, who becomes entangled in a love triangle with the flirtatious actress Philine. After a dramatic fire set by the loyal minstrel Lothario, the group travels to Italy, where a revelation restores Lothario's sanity and uncovers his true identity as Mignon's long-lost father, allowing her and Wilhelm to unite at last.

This fantasy showcases Taffanel's skill in transforming these operatic themes into true virtuosity for this duo line-up. It is one of five fantasies he composed between 1874 and 1884, a period when such works became a popular vehicle for flautists to display their technical ability.

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.

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FOLK SESSION WITH SEB STONE

30 October 2025, 8.00pm

Boilhouse Auditorium

Considered the 'Future of Folk', we are excited to welcome back singer, whistle player and uilleann piper, Seb Stone, to Royal Holloway for this special folk session with some of leading voices on the trad scene.

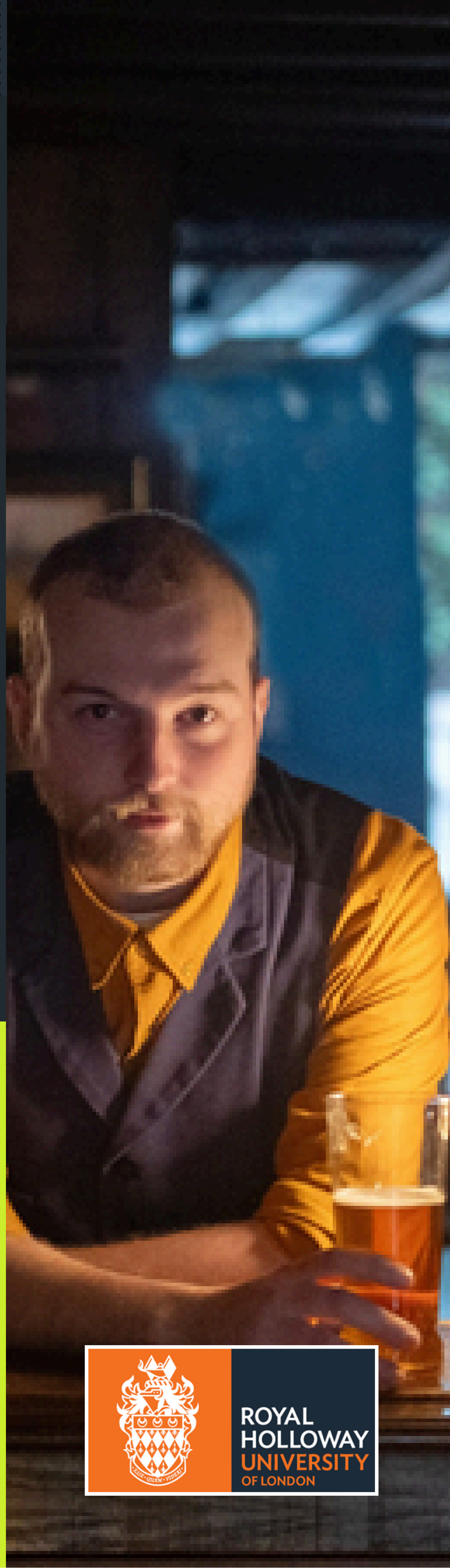
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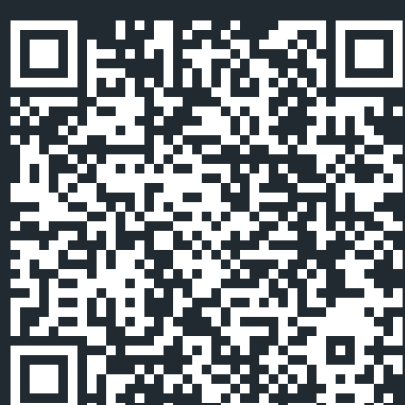


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of the human voice, continuing a celebrated vocal
tradition at Royal Holloway that began in 1886**



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