



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

NEW SOUNDS 2026: THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL PASSION

Thursday, 12 March 2026

Chapel, Founder's Building

with

New Voices Consort

Dr Nathan James Dearden Director

and

Lena Gore Percussion

Daniel Ayers Organ

EVENT PROGRAMME

Organ Improvisation

Prelude on a theme of David Lang

David Lang (b. 1957)

the little match girl (2007)

Text by David Lang (after H.C. Andersen, H.P. Paulli, Picander and Saint Matthew)

Organ Improvisation

Postlude on a theme of David Lang

There will not be a break during this evening's event

Estimated event finish time: 10.00pm

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

DAVID LANG (B. 1957)

the little match girl passion

I wanted to tell a story. A particular story — in fact, the story of *The Little Match Girl* by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The original is ostensibly for children, and it has that shocking combination of danger and morality that many famous children's stories do. A poor young girl, whose father beats her, tries unsuccessfully to sell matches on the street, is ignored, and freezes to death. Through it all she somehow retains her Christian purity of spirit, but it is not a pretty story.

What drew me to *The Little Match Girl* is that the strength of the story lies not in its plot but in the fact that all its parts—the horror and the beauty—are constantly suffused with their opposites. The girl's bitter present is locked together with the sweetness of her past memories; her poverty is always suffused with her hopefulness. There is a kind of naive equilibrium between suffering and hope.

There are many ways to tell this story. One could convincingly tell it as a story about faith or as an allegory about poverty. What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies, and is transfigured. I started wondering what secrets could be unlocked from this story if one took its Christian nature to its conclusion and unfolded it, as Christian composers have traditionally done in musical settings of the Passion of Jesus.

The most interesting thing about how the Passion story is told is that it can include texts other than the story itself. These texts are the reactions of the crowd, penitential thoughts, statements of general sorrow, shock, or remorse. These are devotional guideposts, the markers for our own responses to the story, and they have the effect of making the audience more than spectators to the sorrowful events onstage. These responses can have a huge range—in Bach's "*Saint Matthew Passion*," these extra texts range from famous chorales that his congregation was expected to sing along with to completely invented characters, such as the "Daughter

of Zion” and the “Chorus of Believers.” The Passion format—the telling of a story while simultaneously commenting upon it—has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability.

My piece is called The Little Match Girl Passion and it sets Hans Christian Andersen’s story The Little Match Girl in the format of Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion, interspersing Andersen’s narrative with my versions of the crowd and character responses from Bach’s Passion. The text is by me, after texts by Hans Christian Andersen, H. P. Paulli (the first translator of the story into English, in 1872), Picander (the nom de plume of Christian Friedrich Henrici, the librettist of Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion), and the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. The word “passion” comes from the Latin word for suffering. There is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus—rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus’s, elevating (I hope) her sorrow to a higher plane.

Composer’s Note © David Lang



PROGRAMME TEXT

1. Come, daughter

Come, daughter
Help me, daughter
Help me cry
Look, daughter
Where, daughter
What, daughter
Who, daughter
Why, daughter
Guiltless daughter
Patient daughter
Gone

2. It was terribly cold

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness,

a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. So the little girl went on.
So the little girl went on.

3. Dearest heart

Dearest heart

What did you do that was so wrong? What was so wrong?

Dearest heart

Why is your sentence so hard?

4. In an old apron

In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her

hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

5. Penance and remorse

Penance and remorse

Tear my sinful heart in two

My teardrops

May they fall like rain down upon your poor face May they fall down like rain

My teardrops

Here, daughter, here I am

I should be bound as you were bound

All that I deserve is

What you have endured

Penance and remorse.

Tear my sinful heart in two
My penance
My remorse
My penance

6. Lights were shining

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve- yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags. Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.
Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold.

7. Patience, patience!

Patience.
Patience!

8. Ah! perhaps

Ah! perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers. She drew one out-"scratch!" how it sputtered as it burnt! It gave a warm, bright light, like a little candle, as she held her hand over it. It was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting by a large iron stove, with polished brass feet and a brass ornament. How the fire burned! and seemed so beautifully warm that the child stretched out her feet as if to warm them, when, lo! the flame of the match went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the half-burnt match in her hand. She rubbed another match on the wall. It burst into a flame, and where its light fell upon the wall it became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room. The table was covered with a snowy white table-cloth, on which stood a splendid dinner service, and a

steaming roast goose, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more wonderful, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled across the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and there remained nothing but the thick, damp, cold wall before her.

9. Have mercy, my God

Have mercy, my God.

Look here, my God.

See my tears fall. See my tears fall.

Have mercy, my God. Have mercy.

My eyes are crying.

My heart is crying, my God.

See my tears fall.

See my tears fall, my God.

10. She lighted another match

She lighted another match, and then she found herself sitting under a beautiful Christmas-tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of tapers were burning upon the green branches, and colored pictures, like those she had seen in the show-windows, looked down upon it all. The little one stretched out her hand towards them, and the match went out.

The Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. Then she saw a star fall, leaving behind it a bright streak of fire. "Some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God.

11. From the sixth hour

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour she cried out:
Eli, Eli.

12. She again rubbed a match

She again rubbed a match on the wall, and the light shone round her; in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining,

yet mild and loving in her appearance. "Grandmother," cried the little one, "O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out; you will vanish like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the large, glorious Christmas-tree." And she made haste to light the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother there. And the matches glowed with a light that was brighter than the noon-day, and her grandmother had never appeared so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew upwards in brightness and joy far above the earth, where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God.

13. When it is time for me to go

When it is time for me to go
Don't go from me
When it is time for me to leave
Don't leave me
When it is time for me to die
Stay with me
When I am most scared
Stay with me

14. In the dawn of morning

In the dawn of morning there lay the poor little one, with pale cheeks and smiling mouth, leaning against the wall; she had been frozen to death on the last evening of the year; and the New-year's sun rose and shone upon a little corpse! The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. "She tried to warm herself," said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year's day.

15. We sit and cry

We sit and cry And call to you
Rest soft, daughter, rest soft
Where is your grave, daughter?
Where is your tomb?
Where is your resting place?
Rest soft, daughter, rest soft
You closed your eyes.
I closed my eyes.



THE PERFORMERS

NEW VOICES CONSORT

The New Music Collective and New Voices Consort produces a series of new music events and opportunities every year at Royal Holloway. They are dynamic ensembles whose aim is to present a diverse blend of instrumental and vocal music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to the highest standard, facilitating the opportunity for musicians and audiences alike to experience new and exciting music. Led by Royal Holloway composer and conductor, Dr Nathan James Dearden, its programme features contemporary music by established and emerging composers such as Caroline Shaw, Judith Weir, Michael Finnissy, Missy Mazzoli, David Lang, Howard Skempton, Oliver Knussen, and Nico Muhly, and regularly features the music of Royal Holloway composers. Recent repertoire has included David Lang's 'the little match girl passion', Steve Martland's 'American Invention', Caroline Shaw's 'To the hands', Terry Riley's 'In C', and much anticipated performances of Gavin Bryars' 'Jesus' blood never failed me yet' and 'The Sinking of the Titanic'.

Soprano

Abigail Jones *
Amelia Brown
Amelia Taylor
Amy Mitchell
Chloe Spires
Dimitra Sotriopoulou
Isabel Bonnett
Jacinta Lam
Jess Quigley
Lottie McCallum
Milli Fryer
Yue Dong

Alto

Annabel Mullet
Aoife Smith *
Bernadetta Chin
Katherine Cuppage
Megan Dooley
Vienna Bate

Tenor

Charlotte Vosper *
Edward Dawson *
Mason Henrickson Pennington
Sebastian Isepp
Yizhen Zhang

Bass

Harri Huckstep
Hsin-Hsiang Tong
Jack Brooke
Jack Rolls *
Kotaro Blake
Szymon Taylor

*Featured Soloist

NATHAN JAMES DEARDEN

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR + CONDUCTOR

Described as “a champion of his generation” and whose music is “hauntingly beautiful” (Media Wales), Nathan James Dearden (b. 1992) is an award-winning Welsh composer of concert music and mixed media, conductor, and educator.



Nathan's music has been commissioned, performed, featured and workshopped by the BBC Singers, Philharmonia Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Berkeley Ensemble, Welsh National Opera, mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston, The Tippett Quartet, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, National Youth Choir of Wales, The Heath Quartet, Grand Band, the Fidelio Trio, Hebrides Ensemble, CHROMA ensemble, and flautist Carla Rees. His music regularly features in concerts across the UK and overseas, including at the ISCM World Music Days, Cheltenham Music Festival, Dartington International Summer Festival, International Young Composers' Meeting, CROSSROADS International New Music Festival and Vale of Glamorgan Festival of Music. Nathan began his professional composing life as an inaugural Young Composer-in-Residence with the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and Music Creator for Sinfonia Newydd in 2013. Since then his music has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Cymru, Resonance FM, RTÉ lyric FM, S4C and Soho Radio, whilst also released on NMC Recordings and Delphian.

Nathan has recently won the prestigious Tlws y Cyfansoddwr [Composer's Medal] at the 2024 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol for his work, '(ail-) atgofion'. He has also received the following accolades: 'Best Music Creator' in the 2022 Making Music UK Awards for a legacy commission with National Youth Training Choirs of Great Britain - 'i breathe'; selected to represent Wales at the 2023 International Society for Contemporary music World Music Days in South Africa; awarded an Early Career Public Engagement Grant from the Institute of Musical Research in support of Spotlight Series: Finnissy at 70; selected as a London Philharmonic Orchestra Leverhulme Arts Scholar for their 2016/2017 season; received the inaugural Paul Mealor Award for Outstanding Young Composers in May 2017, and in summer 2021 he received the inaugural Acapela Composer Award for an outstanding Welsh Composer by the Welsh Music Guild.

As a conductor, Nathan is carving a career as one of the most sought-after interpreters of his generation for the performance of twentieth and twenty-first century repertoire. Nathan has held posts and guest conductorships at National Youth Orchestra of Wales, National Youth Choir of Wales, CHROMA, Cardiff University, Cardiff Contemporary Music Group, London Metropolitan University / CASS Institute, and is currently the Director of New Music Collective and New Voices Consort at Royal Holloway, University of London. Nathan made his London Philharmonic Orchestra conducting debut with members of the LPO at their 2018 Summer Gala. Nathan has recorded, performed and premiered works by established living composers such as Judith Weir, David Lang, Caroline Shaw, Michael Finnissy, Benjamin Tassie, Gavin Bryars and Howard Skempton, plus hundreds of new works by young and emerging composers.

Based in London, Nathan is currently Lecturer in Music Composition and Music Performance Manager at Royal Holloway, University of London. Supervised by Mark Bowden, Nathan completed his doctoral research in 2023, where his research interests include musical portraiture, and music as a form of social commentary.

Nathan holds a Bachelor of Music (with Honours) from Cardiff University, where he was awarded the David Lloyd Music Prize for excellence in vocal studies and choral work (2012) and the Elizabeth Griffiths Award for his outstanding contribution to the musical life at Cardiff University School of Music (2013). He later graduated from Cardiff University as a Master of Music (with Distinction) in Music Composition with Robert Fokkens, Louis Johnson and Arlene Sierra, where his studies were kindly supported by Cardiff University, the James Pantyfedwen Foundation and the Vaughan Williams Foundation.

Nathan is a Co-Pilot Mentor for Help Musicians, Member of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (MISM), a Board Member of the Welsh Music Guild, the Wales Council for Ivors Academy, and Presteigne Festival, Featured Composer and Mentor with Cerddwn, Festival Manager of Chamber Music on Valentia, an Academy Member of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors (Ivors), and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

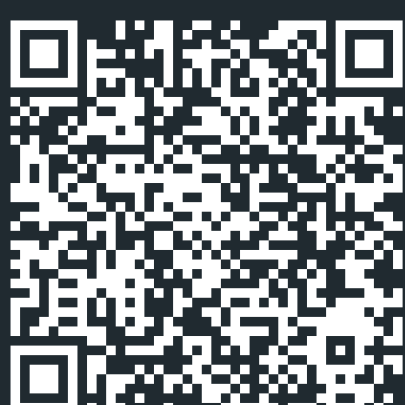
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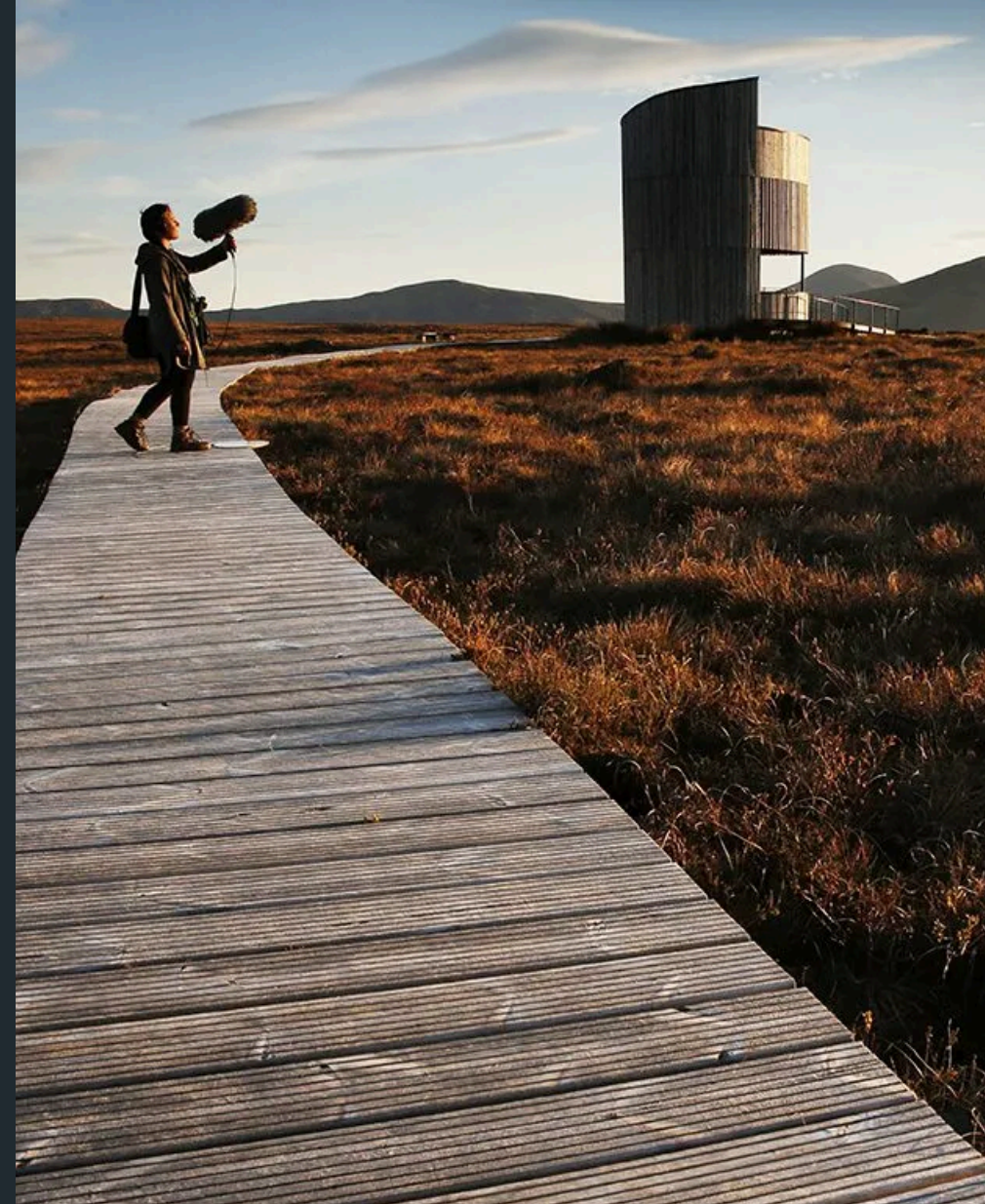
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