

ROYAL
ACADEMY
OF
MUSIC



ALMANAC
2025/26

A CATALOGUE OF THE ACADEMY'S EDUCATIONAL,
ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS
1 AUGUST 2025 – 31 JULY 2026

STUDENTS, STAFF AND ALUMNI

NOTABLE PERFORMANCES AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

Robert Ames, David Butt Philip, Allan Clayton, James Ehnes, Sir Mark Elder, Robert Forrest, Edward Gardner, Benjamin Grosvenor, Hilary Hahn, Stuart Jackson, Anna Lapwood, Peter Moore, Brindley Sherratt, Nicky Spence, Ilan Volkov, Mark Wigglesworth, Ryan Wigglesworth and **John Wilson** performed in BBC Proms concerts over the summer.

Benjamin Grosvenor performed a programme of Chopin, Ravel and Mussorgsky in recitals at Carnegie Hall and the Southbank Centre.

Annie Lennox returned to the Academy to conduct an interview for BBC's *The One Show*.

Inon Barnatan performed in Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, conducted by **Jonathon Heyward**.

Joe Webb, whose debut album *Hamstrings & Hurricanes* was shortlisted for the 2025 Mercury Prize, performed at the Prize's live awards show.

Composition student **Luca Zucchi** was selected to write a new commission for the Lord Mayor of Westminster, which received its premiere at the Academy on Friday 31 October.

Jazz students **Ben Boardman, Anchit Sengupta, Elliot Wong, Klara Devlin** and **Luke McCarthy** performed at the State Banquet held at Windsor Castle on 3 December in front of The King and Queen and the German President and First Lady.

APPOINTMENTS

Kira Doherty was announced as the Academy's new Head of Brass, starting in September 2026.

Abigail Kent was appointed as Principal Harp of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Sarah Marine was appointed as Principal Flute of the Lebanese National Philharmonic Orchestra.

Angus McCall was appointed to the cello section of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Clement Pickering was appointed as Principal Viola of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Katie Smith was appointed to the trumpet section of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Laura Virtanen-Amin was appointed as concertmaster of the Cairo Opera Orchestra.

Stephan Zilias was announced as Music Director of Opera Ballet Vlaanderen in Antwerp, beginning September 2026.

Mio Takahashi, Emily Trubshaw, Florence Plane, Sara Ramírez Rodríguez, Nivanthi Karunaratne and **Aisha Palmer** were selected to join London Philharmonic Orchestra's 2025/26 Foyle Future Firsts musicians.

COMPETITION SUCCESSES

Laila Arafah was awarded a commission through the LSO Helen Hamlyn Panufnik Composers' Scheme.

Charles Cunliffe was announced as the winner of the 2025 John Christie Award, Glyndebourne's most prestigious prize, on 25 August.

At the Gramophone Awards 2025 on 15 October, **Ben Glassberg, Edward Gardner, Robin Tritschler** and **George Xiaoyuan Fu** were presented awards in the Recording Categories, while **Sir Simon Rattle** was announced as Artist of the Year.

David Karapetian won the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's inaugural Sir Bryn Terfel Song Prize on 8 November.

Yuanfan Yang won First Prize at the 2025 James Mottram International Piano Competition at the Royal Northern College of Music on 29 November.

Seth Schultheis won First Prize in the Telekom Beethoven Competition in Bonn on 13 December.

OTHER NEWS

The Academy announced a [£30 million donation](#) from philanthropist Mrs Aud Jebsen to transform its facilities at York Gate and establish a new world-class performance venue. The gift is the largest in the Academy's 204-year history and the biggest donation ever given to a conservatoire outside the USA.

The [Academy Jazz Orchestra was nominated for a Grammy Award](#) in the 'Best Large Jazz Ensemble' category for the Kenny Wheeler Legacy album *Some Days Are Better: The Lost Scores*, recorded in collaboration with the Frost School of Music, University of Miami.

Academy students **Kasparas Mikuzis**, **Olwen Miles**, **Emil Hartikainen**, **Alise Siliņa** and **Elfida Su Turan**, and recent graduate **Nikita Demidenko**, were awarded the LSO Conservatoire Scholarships for 2025/26, making up over half of the new cohort.

The Academy announced a new partnership with **The Frick Collection in New York**. As part of this, Academy students and alumni featured in a series of concerts at the museum in spring 2026, performing newly commissioned works by Academy composers.

The Academy's recording of works by Nielsen was released on Linn Records on 5 September. It features the composer's Sixth Symphony and his final major work, *Commotio*, in arrangements by Hans Abrahamsen, conducted by **Ryan Wigglesworth**.

The Academy received a capital grant from the Office for Students to enhance its digital creativity facilities for teaching and learning. This funded an expansion of the Digital Technology Suite and the upgrading of the Concert Room into a black box with a virtual acoustic system.

As part of the **Sir Elton John Global Exchange Programme**, the Kalla Quartet (**Chloe Hoi Lui**, **Rose Gosney**, **Max Altimira Saura** and **Megan Clarke**) travelled to the mdw, Vienna, to spend a week studying with Johannes Meissl.

Three new digital albums were released as part of the Bicentenary Series on Linn Records: *Tales of Being* by guitarist **Georgi Dimitrov-Jojo**, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* by pianist **Emanuil Ivanov** and *Java Suite* by pianist **Julian Chan**.

The album *Sisters of the Moon* by piano alum **Susana Gómez Vázquez** was nominated for a Latin Grammy Award in the 'Best Classical Album' category.

CONCERT AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Academy Jazz Orchestra was joined by bassist **Anders Jormin** for a performance of his large ensemble works on 3 October.

The Academy Manson Ensemble performed SIDE-BY-SIDE with **London Sinfonietta** on 5 October in a tribute to Pierre Boulez. The concert received a five-star review in [Bachtrack](#).

The Academy's *Resounding Shores* series continued with concerts directed by **Elizabeth Kenny** (5 Oct), **Bjarte Eike** (2 Nov) and **John Butt** (30 Nov).

Ryan Wigglesworth conducted the Academy Soloists Ensemble in a programme of chamber arrangements at Wigmore Hall on 26 October. Students were praised by reviewer Sam Smith in [Music OMH](#) for the 'warmth and vibrancy' of their playing and for the 'joy and energy' they brought to Bruckner's Second Symphony.

John Wilson conducted the Academy Symphony Orchestra in a programme of Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto (with Piano Laureate Fellow **Emanuil Ivanov**) and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* on 7 November.

Royal Academy Opera performed Bizet's *Carmen* between 18 and 21 November, in a production directed by Harry Fehr and conducted by Christopher White.

The **Royal Academy Musical Theatre Company** presented *TREV: The Musical Lives of Trevor Nunn* on 9 December.

STUDENTS, STAFF AND ALUMNI

NOTABLE PERFORMANCES AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

Max Richter received an Academy Award nomination in the 'Music (Original Score)' category for *Hamnet* (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack).

David Butt Philip made his debut at Teatro alla Scala as Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, in a production conducted by **Alexander Soddy**.

Braimah Kanneh-Mason, Amelia Lewis, Charlie Lovell-Jones and **Michal Oren** were named among Classic FM's 'Rising Stars' for 2026.

At the Jazz FM Awards 2026, **Emma Rawicz** was presented with the UK Jazz Act of the Year award and **Donovan Haffner** received the Breakthrough Act of the Year award.

Sir Simon Rattle was awarded the 2026 Golden Mahler Medal by the International Gustav Mahler Society.

At the 2026 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, **Jacob Collier** received the Gamechanger Award, **Matilda Lloyd** received the Young Artist Award, **John Wilson** received the Conductor Award and **Peter Moore** took home the Instrumentalist Award.

Sam Oladeinde performed the role of Javert in the West End production of *Les Misérables*, part of the show's celebratory 40th anniversary cast.

New works by **Marcello Palazzo, Laila Arafah** and **Zhenyan Li** were given their premieres by the London Symphony Orchestra, as part of the Helen Hamlyn Panufnik Composers' Scheme.

APPOINTMENTS

Patrick Bolton joined the BBC National Orchestra of Wales as Second Bassoon.

Conrad Chatterton was selected for Deutsche Oper am Rhein's Opera Studio for 2026/27.

James Gilbert was appointed Principal Clarinet of the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Theodore McAlindon was selected to join the International Opera Studio at Opernhaus Zürich.

Jeremy Ng was appointed as Organ Scholar at St Paul's Cathedral and **Callum Knox** as Organ Scholar at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Enyi Okpara was announced as a Fellow Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra for the 2026/27 season.

Oliver Roberts joined the Royal Scottish National Orchestra as Associate Principal Flute.

Alexander Turner was appointed as Associate Choral Director and **Susie Hill** as Director of the Cathedral Singers at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Amy Yule was appointed Principal Flute of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Tomos Boyles, Gabrielé Sutkutė, Volt Duo (**Gus McQuade** and **Gonçalo Maia Caetano**), Trio Nostos (**Monty Guo, Jae Min Kim Kang** and **Khrystyna Mykhailichenko**) and the Karelia Quartet (**Emil Hartikainen, Megan Yang, Felix Pascoe** and **Daniel Schultz**) were selected as Kirckman Concerts Young Artists for 2026/27.

COMPETITION SUCCESSES

Olwen Miles received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Emily Anderson Violin Prize on 15 January, while trumpet quintet FiveBy5, comprising **Volodymyr Bykhun, Malte Sunding, Sigrid Bengtsson, Ellinor Bengtson** and **Sasha Canter**, received the Philip Jones Brass Prize.

At the 2026 Royal Over-Seas League Annual Music Competition, **Binny-Supin Yang** won the Singers Section Final (18 February), **Sofia Patterson-Gutiérrez** won the Wind, Brass and Percussion Section Final (11 February) and **Gabrielé Sutkutė** won the Keyboard Section Final (24 February).

Tohi Harada won First Prize in the 2026 Dutch Guitar Foundation's International Competition, held in Groningen on 26 February. Tohi was also awarded the Musicians' Company Prince's Prize on 13 April.

Michael Ronan won First Prize at the International Handel Singing Competition on 11 March.

As members of the Isla String Quartet, **Mio Takahashi, Kynan Walker** and **Danushka Edirisinghe** won First Prize and Audience Prize at the Bad Tölz International String Quartet Competition on 12 April.

As members of the quintet Lumas Winds, **Christopher Vettraino, Florence Plane** and **Benjamin Hartnell-Booth** won First Prize at the Lyon International Chamber Music Competition on 18 April.

OTHER NEWS

Academy alumni **Max Richter** and **Richard Farnes** were awarded CBEs in the 2026 New Year Honours. Honorary Members of the Academy **Cynthia Erivo** and **Matt Lucas** received an MBE and OBE respectively.

The Academy announced the first fully funded [Foundation Year course](#) for a UK music conservatoire.

Strings students **Xinyuan He, Hamish Jamieson, Tom Amigoni** and **Noah Daniel** were selected for the London Symphony Orchestra's String Experience scheme.

As part of the **Sir Elton John Global Exchange Programme**, we welcomed violinists from The Glenn Gould School, Toronto and the Hong Kong Academy to take part in the Academy Symphony Orchestra project with Sir Mark Elder. Additionally, a conductor from the Paris Conservatoire joined us for two weeks of study with Sian Edwards.

CONCERT AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Colin Currie led a concert on 23 January celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence, including works by Varèse, John Adams and Steve Reich.

Students performed alongside musicians from the Paris Conservatoire in *Resounding Shores* concerts in the Duke's Hall on 1 February and at Les Invalides in Paris on 5 February, directed by **Elizabeth Kenny**.

The Academy Jazz Orchestra collaborated with steel pan virtuoso **Leon Foster Thomas** on 4 February, performing brand new arrangements of his works for large ensemble.

Students performed SIDE-BY-SIDE with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Southbank Centre on 7 February. The concert was conducted by **Edward Gardner** and featured music by Ligeti and Bartók.

The 12th annual Academy Jazz Festival took place between 11 and 12 February, with appearances from **Gwilym Simcock, Kit Downes, Julian Argüelles** and **Binker Golding**.

The Academy Symphony Orchestra performed Respighi tone poems with conductor **Jonathon Heyward** on 13 February, and a programme of Elgar and Sibelius under the baton of **Sir Mark Elder** on 27 February.

Royal Academy Opera presented Handel's *Rinaldo* between 17 and 20 March. The production was praised in [London Theatre Reviews](#): 'This latest restaging delivers precision, passion, drama and intensity and is executed beautifully with grace [...] The opening night consisted of stellar pitch-perfect performances by all.'

Artists including **Nicky Spence, James Ehnes, Claude-Michel Schönberg** and **Imogen Cooper** gave masterclasses at the Academy between 16 and 24 February.

STUDENTS, STAFF AND ALUMNI

NOTABLE PERFORMANCES AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

Freddie De Tommaso sang the role of Rodolfo in The Royal Opera's production of *La bohème*, having appeared in the same role in performances at the Met Opera and the Puccini Festival earlier in the season.

Lucy Crowe performed music by Mahler and Richard Strauss in a concert with the London Symphony Orchestra and **Sir Simon Rattle** at the Barbican Hall.

Stephenson Ardern-Sodje sang the title role in the new West End production of *Hamilton* at the Victoria Palace Theatre.

Allan Clayton, Alex Otterburn, Rupert Charlesworth, Adam Marsden and **Michael Ronan** performed in Glyndebourne's production of *Billy Budd*.

Roxanna Panufnik was granted an OBE for her services to music and to charity and **Diana Ambache** was awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours 2026.

Hadley Fraser performed the role of Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* at the Chichester Festival Theatre.

Junyan Chen and **Aaron Azunda Akugbo** were selected as European Concert Hall Organisation Rising Stars for 2027/28.

Allan Clayton sang the title role in The Royal Opera's production of *Peter Grimes*.

Helen George starred as Tracy Lord in the musical production of Cole Porter's *High Society* at the Barbican Theatre.

Leo Simpe-Asante's new short comedy, *Godot's To-Do List*, received its premiere at the Royal Court Theatre.

Desmonda Cathabel performed the role of Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the London Palladium.

APPOINTMENTS

Eleanor Blakeney was appointed as Principal Horn of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Angus Butt and **Jan Kruijsse** were appointed to the trombone section of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Charlotte Clapperton joined Scottish Opera's Emerging Artists Scheme for the 2026/27 season.

Thomas Donkin was selected for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's Emerging Musicians Fellowship in the 2026/27 season.

Pioneering Baroque violinist-director **Bjarte Eike** was announced as a Visiting Professor in the Academy's Historical Performance Department.

Annemarie Federle and **Norberto Lopez** joined the Academy's Brass Department as Visiting Artist in Performance Mentoring and Horn Professor respectively.

Stephen Fitzpatrick was announced as the next Head of Harp at the Academy, beginning in September 2026.

Matthew Kitteringham was appointed as Associate Principal Bassoon with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Ewan Millar was appointed as Oboe Section Leader of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, and selected as a Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) Artist.

Michal Oren was announced as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Calleva Assistant Conductor for the 2026/27 season.

Erin O'Rourke joined the Wilhelmsen Opera Studio for Young Singers at the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC ALMANAC SUMMER 2026

Timothy Ridout and **Ruth Gibson** were announced as Viola Professors at the Academy.

Elena Urioste was announced as a Violin Professor at the Academy.

COMPETITION SUCCESSES

Klara Solén and **George Herbert** together won the Audience Prize, Pianist's Prize and Singer's Prize at the Somerset Song Prize on 10 May.

Sofía Patterson-Gutiérrez won the Gold Medal at the 2026 Royal Over-Seas League Annual Music Competition final on 15 May. Sofia was also awarded Second Prize and the Junior Jury Award at the Carl Nielsen International Competition 2026 on 16 June.

Ivan Sendetsky was named a laureate at the Queen Elisabeth Competition 2026, dedicated to the cello, in Brussels on 30 May.

Tohi Harada was awarded the Musicians' Company's New Elizabethan Award on 9 July.

OTHER NEWS

At the Graduation Ceremony in July, the Academy honoured artists and members of its community including **Louise Alder**, **Christine Allado**, **Lord Blackwell**, **Harry Christophers**, **Gareth Coker**, **Vilde Frang**, **Giovanni Guzzo**, **Gareth Lockrane** and **Elena Urioste**. Internationally renowned musical theatre and Shakespeare director **Trevor Nunn** received an Honorary Doctorate.

As part of the **Sir Elton John Global Exchange Programme**, two Academy strings students travelled to The Glenn Gould School in Toronto for a week-long project with the conservatoire's symphony orchestra.

The Academy's Concert Room was reconfigured into a black box with a hybrid virtual acoustic system, which allows students to experiment with the manipulation of the acoustic environment in their compositions and performances.

CONCERT AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Academy Symphony Orchestra performed concertos by Stravinsky and Weill under the baton of **Edward Gardner** on 1 May. The concert was given a five-star review in [The Arts Desk](#): 'Serendipity smiled on a lunchtime event you'd have been happy to hear any time, anywhere in the world... Could either concerto have been better played? I can only answer with an emphatic "no".'

Steven Isserlis, **Louise Alder** and principal players from the **Berlin Philharmonic** gave public masterclasses at the Academy between 5 May and 10 June.

Royal Academy Opera performed Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* on 13 and 15 May, which received four stars in [Opera Review](#): 'This production does not soften the opera's darkness, but it approaches it with intelligence and restraint. It is musically impressive, dramatically coherent and often deeply moving.'

The **Royal Academy Musical Theatre Company** presented a production of *Little Women* between 11 and 14 June, praised by [London Theatre Reviews](#) as 'a heartwarmingly ambitious and charming depiction of a well-loved classic'. The company then performed *Chess* between 2 and 5 July, and received a five-star review in [Everything Theatre](#).

The annual **Summer Piano Festival** took place between 15 and 17 June, featuring music by Alkan and Sorabji, the final edition of Robert Schumann's complete piano works, film score improvisation and music inspired by eastern European folklore.

Ryan Bancroft conducted the Academy Symphony Orchestra in concerts in the Duke's Hall and at the Aldeburgh Festival on 25 and 26 June, with the latter featuring **Dame Sarah Connolly** as soloist. The programme featured music by Gubaidulina, Zemlinsky and Prokofiev.