

OXFORD INTERNATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL

Oxford Song Young Artist Programme 2026

generously supported by Jerwood Foundation and other charitable trusts and foundations

Oxford Song's successful Young Artist Programme runs over 18 months and offers a range of high-quality training and performance opportunities for duos in the early stages of their careers. For eight selected duos, the programme aims to develop all areas of song performance for singers and pianists equally, in a welcoming and participant-focused environment. Benefits of the programme include:

Oxford International Song Festival 2026

- A fully-funded place on the residential Mastercourse (17-24 October 2026) working intensively with internationally renowned artists and performing in the Mastercourse Showcase Recital.
- An Emerging Artist slot: a 15-minute performance before one of the headline evening concerts.

Events in 2027

- Masterclasses as part of the Spring Song weekend.
 - At least two other masterclasses/workshops during the year.
 - Oxford International Song Festival 2027
- The culmination of the Programme is a showcase recital for each duo at the 2027 OISF.

General

- Professionally filmed footage of at least one performance.
- Free access to other Oxford Song concerts and events.
- An informal, introductory day prior to OISF 2026.
- Other performance opportunities that may arise throughout the period.

All masterclasses and training opportunities are fully funded. Fees are offered for all performances with the exception of the Mastercourse showcase recital.

Up to 18 duos will be selected to attend public auditions for the Programme, which will take place during our Spring Song Festival on 13-15 March 2026. Please see below for further information on how to apply.

Application guidelines & further information

INTRODUCTION

The Young Artist Programme exists for the benefit of those who take part, and we want every aspect of your interaction with us to be positive. We are aware that it will take a significant investment of time for you to apply and therefore regret that due to the number of applications we receive, it is not possible to provide individual feedback on the initial selection for live auditions. However, our Artistic Director will write up some general reflections on the applications we receive to share with everyone. For those selected for live audition, we strive to make the audition process as welcoming and rewarding as possible and hope that even those not ultimately selected for the Programme will feel it has been a beneficial experience.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Entry requirements

Applications are welcome from duos (one singer and one pianist) who are current students or have left full-time education not earlier than 1 May 2022, and are currently intending to reside in the UK until October 2027. We are unable to accept applications from individual musicians or chamber ensembles. Due to the structure of the programme, we regretfully cannot accept applications from artists based outside the UK.

How to apply

Each duo should complete the [online form](#) and submit the following:

- Links to recordings
- A proposed 20-minute programme (see below) for their audition recital
- A written statement
- References

Recordings

Links to recordings of three songs for voice and piano should be sent with applications. We appreciate that recordings cannot always be made in a professional studio but please endeavour to provide a reasonable level of quality. Each year, we receive several recordings where it is impossible to judge the performance due to the low quality of sound.

Audition recital programme

Audition recital programmes **must last no longer than 23 minutes**, including breaks/spoken introductions.

Any songs are welcome, and the programme will be an important consideration in the adjudication process. Programmes can and do vary widely in their approach, which is something we enjoy. This can range from single composer or poet-based programmes, to thematic programmes with highly contrasting repertoire, to a sequence of songs which is balanced and engaging without a binding concept. We welcome contemporary repertoire and encourage exploration of repertoire outside the traditional canon. The main thing we want to see is that you've put careful consideration into it, and the main thing we want to hear is a performance that shows you at your best in music you are passionate about.

Written statement

In a couple of paragraphs (150-300 words), please tell us a bit about your interest in song. Are there any particular areas you are interested in (specific composers or styles for example), or

areas you are especially keen to develop (particular languages or creative programming for example)? What do you think the OISF Young Artist Programme could help you achieve?

References

Duos should either send one individual reference per artist, or one reference for the duo. This/these must be written by an established professional musician. References should be sent with applications or can be sent separately to kate@oxfordsong.org by the closing date of Wednesday 3 December 2025.

Please note it is the applicants' responsibility to communicate with referees to ensure references are received by the closing date.

Notifications & feedback on applications

Duos will receive confirmation that their applications have been received.

We will notify all applicants as to whether their application has been successful or not by 15 December 2025.

Key application dates

(Please see next page for full list of essential dates for the Young Artist Programme)

Applications open **17 September 2025**

Closing date for applications **10am on Wednesday 3 December 2025**

We will contact all applicants to let them know the outcome by **15 December 2025**

Audition recitals **13 & 14 March 2026**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Auditions

Up to 18 duos will be selected to perform their audition recitals as part of our Spring Song Festival in Oxford on 13 & 14 March 2026. These will take place during the daytime and will be open to the public.

Adjudication

The adjudication panel will include the renowned singers Mark Padmore and Katie Bray, and our Artistic Director, pianist Sholto Kynoch.

The panel will be looking for artists who can construct interesting and appealing programmes, as well as engage with and inspire their audience.

Recording & photography

The audition recitals will be filmed. Oxford Song will not pay a fee to artists for the use of this footage, either as a live-stream performance or in subsequent promotional use, but video footage will be made available to duos for their own promotional use. A professional photographer may discreetly take pictures of the performance, and we intend that each duo should have an opportunity for promotional photos to be taken after their audition.

Expenses & tickets

All duos will be offered a pair of complimentary tickets for friends & family for their audition-recital, and further comps can be arranged for industry contacts. Each duo will be offered complimentary tickets for the evening recital following their audition.

Oxford Song will cover reasonable UK travel expenses.

A note on participation

This is a highly sought-after scheme, and it is important that all our selected Young Artist duos participate fully in the programme. The Mastercourse 2026 is a particularly central element of this, and we expect everyone to attend the course full-time throughout 17-24 October 2026. If you already know you will be studying in October 2026, you should apply for a leave of absence or discuss this with your Head of Department now. We realise that the cycle of music college auditions may mean your plans are not yet clear: if you apply and we offer you an audition, we will also ask what your plans are, and may then ask for an update in January if you are still confirming your broader study plans. If you will be attending a music college Opera School, for example, you are highly unlikely to be granted an N/A for the Mastercourse period and we may therefore ask you to withdraw from our audition process (we would not in any way view this negatively and it would not affect your chance of a successful future audition).

More broadly, we do appreciate that plans change, but please only apply if you are confident you will be able to participate fully in the programme.

If you have any queries please contact kate@oxfordsong.org