



YORKSHIRE LATE STARTERS STRINGS

ORCHESTRA SEEKS COMPOSER No.9

YORKSHIRE LATE STARTERS STRINGS New Music Competition 2025-26

After a year's delay, YLSS's biennial competition is back!

Inspired by the success of previous rounds*, we are now inviting entries for our 2025-26 New Music Competition. Four of the submitted pieces will be chosen for a Workshop with award-winning composer Andrew Toovey, and YLSS players, and from these one piece will be selected for performance in 2026. In addition, each shortlisted entrant will be offered a one-to-one tutorial with Andrew Toovey.

Our aims for the competition are to:

- Create an original piece of music of high quality, which is inspiring, challenging yet technically accessible for YLSS. This will add to the very limited repertoire specifically written for similar orchestras of adult learners.
- Give YLSS the experience of being part of the creative process and of working with a composer. The process of selecting the composer and working on the piece is designed to involve all YLSS members who wish to take part. Entrants will be encouraged to share with YLSS the

inspiration for their piece and discuss the process of composition, to enhance players' understanding and performance of the music.

- Broaden YLSS's musical horizons, giving an impetus to developing more adventurous playing and more confident performance.
- Enable a composer, of any age, living in the UK or Ireland, to work with YLSS in creating a new piece for performance.

How we plan to achieve this:

- Stage 1
An open invitation to composers, of any age, living in the UK or Ireland, to submit an approx 8-10 minute composition. All entries will be considered anonymously by the Selection Panel and four will be shortlisted for a Workshop.
- Stage 2
A Workshop for four shortlisted composers. Andrew Toovey will give feedback and coaching on each piece as it is rehearsed with YLSS and its conductor Stuart Hazelton. Andrew will also offer an individual tutorial with each shortlisted composer. The Workshop and tutorials will be held in/near Leeds and we will meet travel expenses up to £50 each for shortlisted composers. One composition/composer will be selected to work with YLSS.
- Stage 3
The selected composer will work with YLSS, attending two rehearsals, to develop and rehearse their piece for a performance in 2026. They will receive a prize of £500 (plus contribution towards expenses).

Timetable:

Stage 1	Call for entries	February 2025
	Closing date	31 July 2025
	Shortlisting	August
2025	Entrants notified of decision	by mid-Sept 2025

Stage 2	Selection Weekend with 4 shortlisted entrants	
	Tutorials (in Leeds)	Saturday 15 Nov
2025		
	Workshop and selection (in Wetherby)	Sunday 16 Nov 2025
Stage 3	Two rehearsals with selected composer (in Leeds)	Jan-June 2026
	First performance	Summer 2026, date & venue to be finalised

Requirements:

- Compositions should be appropriate for YLSS (see below).
- Compositions must not have been previously performed or published.
- Compositions should be free of any copyright restrictions that may prevent public performance and copying parts for use.
- Compositions should last between 8 and 10 minutes.
- Compositions must not have been composed in their entirety using AI.
- Entrants should provide a pdf, or 4 paper copies, of their score for selection and be prepared to provide a full set of parts if shortlisted.
- Entrants should provide a brief programme note (100-200 words) and a short biography.
- There is no age limit. Indeed, as a late starter orchestra, we welcome late starter composers!
- Entrants must be based in the UK or Ireland. Please note that shortlisted composers must be able to attend the Workshop and be able to work with YLSS to rehearse their piece if selected as winner (see timetable above).
- The score and parts must be easily legible, in pdf or paper format.
- The winning composition will be premièred by YLSS at a performance of their choosing.
- The four composers shortlisted for the Workshop will be paid actual travel expenses incurred of up to £50 each.
- The prize for the composition selected by YLSS will be £500. In addition YLSS will pay towards expenses incurred (travel to rehearsals, copying, etc) up to a max of £200.
- The winning composer will be expected to attend two rehearsals in Leeds to work with YLSS.

- Entries should include:
 - + Entry form
 - + Pdf or 4 paper copies of the score. As shortlisting is anonymous, scores must not identify the composer
 - + Brief programme note (100-200 words), also anonymous

- + Short biography, including musical education/background
- Paper scores will be returned if a suitable stamped addressed envelope is provided.
- If possible please send a sound file or CD of your entry, this would be helpful but is not compulsory.
- We are sorry that we are not able to provide feedback to entrants whose compositions are not shortlisted.

Entries must arrive at the address below by 31 July 2025. Entries received after that date will not be considered. All entries will be acknowledged. We look forward to receiving your entry.

Please send online to: jenny@jennybrierley.com

or by post to:

YLSS New Music

1 Meeting House Lane

Acomb

York YO26 5FD

Some information about YLSS that may be helpful

Yorkshire Late Starters Strings is a non-professional string orchestra for late starter adult string players of any age. We are based in Leeds but with enthusiastic and committed players coming from across Yorkshire and further afield. The orchestra welcomes players of any standard without audition so players cover a range of abilities from about Grade 2 upwards to a few at Grade 8. The majority of players are in the middle of this range. The orchestra includes violin, viola, cello and double bass sections, with a typical total of around 30 players, well spread across the parts. However, the mix of instruments/ability can vary from week to week so a piece that is flexible enough to cope with this is essential! Solo parts should not be included.

What we are looking for is music that will be inspiring, expressive, adventurous, and yet playable by the wide range of abilities that we encompass. This is where the challenge lies for the composer – to create a piece that all players can fully participate in and rehearse to a standard fit for performance. If the piece is as good, original and exciting as we hope for, there will be opportunities for further performance by similar groups with which we have links.

The winner will be chosen by a Selection Panel including composer Andrew Toovey, conductor Stuart Hazelton and two members of YLSS, after consultation with the orchestra.

If you have any queries about the competition please contact jenny@jennybrierley.com. You can find out more about YLSS at www.ylss.org.

*Previous competition winners

2007-8 Winner - Paul Burnell *3 Pieces for Strings*, premièred at CoMA Contemporary Music Festival July 2008 and featured on BBC Radio 3 'Play to the Nation' October 2008. Guest composer: Philip Cashian.

2009-10 Winner - Laurence Rose *a theory of nothing*, premièred at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival November 2010. Guest composer: Joe Cutler.

2011-12 Winner - Alison Wrenn *Battle of the Winwaed*, premièred at Headingley Music Festival June 2012. Guest composer: Sally Beamish.

2013-14 Winner - Elaine Levene *Five Snatched Sonnets*, premièred at CoMA Leeds Concert at Heart June 2014. Guest composer: Emily Howard.

2015-16 Winner – Phil Taylor *I See Faces in Everything*, premièred at CoMA Leeds Concert at Heart June 2016. Guest composer: Michael Finnissy.

2017-18 Winner – Mark Browse *Five Variations on Pange Lingua*, premièred at St Barnabas, Weeton July 2018. Guest composer: Judith Weir.

2019-20 Winner – Jasmine Simons *Fantasia for string orchestra*, premièred at St James, Wetherby July 2022. Guest composer Howard Skempton.

2022-23 Winner – Tom Carr *Sanctuary*, premièred at St James, Wetherby July 2023. Guest composer Nicola LeFanu.



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