

NORTH EAST PIANO FESTIVAL 2026



OFFICIAL SYLLABUS

Affiliated to the British & International Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance, and Speech (Provisional)

A Festival for Young Pianists across the North East of England

Presented by North East Piano Festival Committee

Venue

1st floor, 1-3 Cross Street, Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4XE

Festival Date

Saturday, 13th June 2026

Adjudicator

James Kirby

Entry Closing Date

1st May 2026

(A detailed timetable will be published following the closing date.

NO LATE ENTRIES CAN BE ACCEPTED)

Online entry via www.northeastpianofestival.co.uk

Email: northeastpianofestival@gmail.com

Tel.: +44 7391 491123

Welcome to our very first North East Piano Festival 2026

It is with great pleasure that we welcome competitors, teachers and families to the inaugural North East Piano Festival 2026. Established to serve young pianists across Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, Durham, Sunderland and the wider North East region, the Festival aims to provide a high-quality educational performance platform within a supportive and professionally adjudicated environment.

As a Festival affiliated to the British & International Federation of Festivals, we are committed to upholding the Federation's long-standing principles of encouragement, artistic integrity and educational value. Each performer will receive constructive written adjudication designed to support their continued musical development.

The Festival welcomes pianists from preparatory level through to advanced performers working at Grade 8 standard and beyond. Whether participating for the first time or presenting a more substantial repertoire, all competitors are encouraged to approach the platform with confidence, musical curiosity and a spirit of excellence.

We are deeply grateful to our adjudicator, supporters and volunteers whose contribution makes this regional initiative possible.

We look forward to celebrating the musical achievements of young pianists across the North East.

With warm wishes

Sam Tse

North East Piano Festival President

FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

The North East Piano Festival is administered by a voluntary committee committed to maintaining professional standards in line with the principles of the British & International Federation of Festivals.

President	Sam Tse	
Chairman	Connie Chan	
Treasurer	Alison Ki	
Safeguarding Officer	Richard Loughran	
Committee Members	QinQin Chen	Hailey Doyle

The Committee reserves the right to amend regulations and organisational arrangements where necessary to ensure the smooth running of the Festival.

ADJUDICATOR

James Kirby | Piano



James appears as recitalist and concerto soloist throughout the UK and Europe. Highlights include performances at London's Wigmore Hall, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh Festivals, St George's, Bristol, and Dora Stoutzker Hall, Cardiff. He is increasingly in demand in the Far East, where recent appearances include concerts in China, Singapore and Malaysia.

James studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Hamish Milne and the Moscow Conservatoire with Tatiana Nikolaeva and Eliso Virsaladze. Following his student years in Moscow he undertook regular solo and chamber music tours of the former Soviet Union, making notable appearances at the Sakharov Festival in Nizhny Novgorod, the Omsk Festival and the Viktor Merzhanov Festival in Tambov. He was a semifinalist in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and won First Prize in the Citta di Marsala Piano Competition in Sicily.

He has appeared as concerto soloist with the English, Scottish and Belarusian Chamber Orchestras, the Moscow, Kazakh, Astana and Penang Symphony Orchestras, the Arad and Oradea Philharmonic Orchestras (Romania), in venues including the Royal Albert Hall and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in London, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire and Astana Opera House. He has performed both Brahms Concertos in Russia and Romania.

James is a member of the Barbican Piano Trio, performing at Wigmore Hall, in major UK festivals and concert series, and throughout Europe and the USA. Highlights include Carnegie Recital Hall and many cycles of Beethoven's complete Piano Trios including the Master Concert Series at Wigmore Hall. The Trio's repertoire consists of over seventy works.

He enjoyed a long collaboration with the celebrated Russian violinist Lydia Mordkovitch and has worked with Martyn Brabbins, the Vanbrugh Quartet, BBC Singers, Dame Sarah Connolly and the pianist David Willison.

James is a dedicated teacher and holds posts at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Royal Holloway, University of London, and Eton College. He is a regular jury member of international piano competitions and much in demand for masterclasses and as an adjudicator.

PIANO CLASSES

NON-COMPETITIVE (EDUCATIONAL)

Class	Description	Time Limit	Fee
1	Piano Solo – Preparatory / Beginner	2 mins	£7

GRADED PIANO SOLO CLASSES

(Own choice from ABRSM, Trinity or equivalent syllabuses. Exams need not have been taken.)

Class	Description	Time Limit	Fee
2	Piano Solo Grade 1	2 mins	£7
3	Piano Solo Grade 2	2 mins	£8
4	Piano Solo Grade 3	2 mins	£8
5	Piano Solo Grade 4	3 mins	£8
6	Piano Solo Grade 5	3 mins	£8
7	Piano Solo Grade 6	4 mins	£8
8	Piano Solo Grade 7	5 mins	£9
9	Piano Solo Grade 8	6 mins	£9

RECITAL & OPEN CLASSES

Class	Description	Time Limit	Fee
10	Junior Piano Recital (Grade 4-6)	6 mins	£11
11	Open Piano Solo (Grade 8 standard and above)	7 mins	£11
12	Open Piano Recital	10 mins	£14

FESTIVAL REGULATIONS

These Regulations apply to all entrants. Submission of an entry constitutes acceptance of these Regulations.

1. Eligibility

Competitors must be 18 years old or under as of the first day of the festival. The Festival is intended for amateur performers only. Professional pianists and postgraduate music students are not eligible to compete.

2. Entries

Entries must be submitted on the festival website: www.northeastpianofestival.co.uk by the specified closing date and accompanied by the appropriate fee. Late entries WILL NOT be accepted. The Committee reserves the right to:

- Refuse or accept any entry without assigning a reason
- Limit the number of entries in any class
- Combine, divide or cancel classes
- Appoint substitute or additional adjudicators
- Amend the published timetable or arrangements if circumstances require

3. Entry Fees

Entry fees are as stated for each class in the syllabus. They must be sent with entry forms and cannot be returned. Competitor's name required as reference when payment is made by BACS.

4. Repertoire

Only one piece is to be played per class unless stated otherwise; all repeats, da capos, and codas should be observed. An Open Class is for performers who are playing at the standard of Grade 8 or above (exams need not have been taken). This includes diploma holders but not postgraduate students or those who have embarked on a professional career.

5. Performance & Time Limits

Competitors must state the approximate duration of their performance on the entry form. Time limits are strict; adjudicators reserve the right to stop performances that exceed the limit. The adjudicator's decision is final.

6. Music & Copyright

A clean copy of own-choice music must be provided for the adjudicator on the day of performance. The Festival is legally obliged to supply details of all performed works to the Performing Rights Society (PRS).

7. Awards, Certificates & Trophies

All performers will receive written adjudication and the categories awarded will be in accordance with the British and International Federation of Festivals standards:

95 marks+	Exceptional
90 - 94	Outstanding
85 - 89	Honours
80 - 84	Commended
75 - 79	Merit
70 - 74	Progressing
65 - 69	Developing

Marks

95+	A superlative performance, displaying exceptional artistic individuality
90-94	An impressive performance technically and artistically, displaying spontaneity & clear individuality
85-89	An excellent performance, demonstrating fluent technical and artistic skills with emerging individuality
80-84	A convincing performance technically & artistically, with increasing stylistic & communication skills
75-79	A competent performance, showing some artistic awareness and/or technical ability
70-74	A performance showing development of technique and/or communication and commitment
65-69	A performance demonstrating an awareness of technical skills, requiring more consistency & artistry

Certificates, medals, and trophies will be awarded for winning performances in all classes.

8. Special Cash Prizes

The adjudicator will choose the best pianist from specific categories to receive cash awards:

Grade 1 - 3	£30
Grade 4 - 6	£45
Grade 7 - Open	£80

9. Photography & Recording

Photography, video or audio recording is strictly prohibited without prior written consent of the Festival Committee and all performers concerned.

10. Safeguarding & Child Protection

The festival is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. The Festival operates in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct of the British & International Federation of Festivals. The festival has a designated Safeguarding Officer. Parents and guardians remain responsible for the supervision of children at all times.

11. Data Protection

By submitting an entry, competitors consent to the Festival holding personal data for administration purposes in accordance with UK GDPR legislation. Data will not be shared except where legally required.

12. Pupils of an Adjudicator

Pupils of an Adjudicator may not compete in any class which is judged by that Adjudicator.

13. General Conditions

The festival cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to personal property. Assistance dogs only are permitted in Festival venues. Mobile phones must be switched off during performances. Latecomers may not be admitted until a suitable break. At the end of each class, all current participants must leave the hall to allow room for the next class. The Festival reserves the right to amend these Regulations where necessary.

NORTH EAST PIANO FESTIVAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The British and International Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech work for amateur festivals everywhere to help create thousands of educational performance opportunities for children and young people each year.

The Federation, and our member Festivals, are committed to ensuring safe environments for children and young people and believe that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to recommend best practice which protects them.

This policy applies to our Board of Trustees, paid staff, Adjudicator members, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of the Federation and our member Festivals.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy:

- to provide protection for the children and young people who participate in our festivals, including the children of festival members
- to provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and safe working practice for staff and volunteers
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and safe working practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

The Federation will review this policy each year in November in line with Safe Network guidance or sooner in light of any changes in legislation or guidance.

CREATING SAFER FESTIVAL FOR EVERYONE

The Federation and its member Festivals use the following policies and procedures to create Safer Festivals for everyone:

1. A single, definitive Child Protection Policy adopted by all Federation Festivals.
2. One, or more, designated Festival Safeguarding Officers (FSO) appointed for each Federation Festival. The FSO for the North East Piano Festival is Richard Loughran who will be available via Reception Desk on Festival Day
3. Best practice advice in the form of Safe Working Practice and Festival Child Protection leaflets, with training for all festival staff and volunteers, including clear reporting procedures for anyone with a concern about a child.
4. Appropriate recruitment and induction procedures for all new festival staff and volunteers responsible for providing safe environments for everyone attending or performing at a Federation Festival.
5. All teachers, parents, guardians and carers are asked to report all incidents of any nature to anyone wearing a Festival identity badge, if required. All reported incidents will be handled in accordance with the Safe Working Practice and Festival Child Protection best practice advice. In addition, we will ensure the availability of a quiet area/room where concerns can be expressed in private.
6. For the duration of a festival all teachers, parents, guardians and carers are responsible for the continuous care and supervision of their own children/pupils. If they are unable to attend personally, they must delegate their responsibilities to an identified adult and ensure that their children/pupils are aware of the identity and name of the person responsible for their care. This includes supervision throughout all festival venues, performance, practice and changing areas that may be provided. Children must not be

dropped off outside the venue, to make their own way inside. They must be accompanied. The festival cannot take responsibility for any property left unattended.

7. No unauthorised photography, audio or video recording of children and young people is allowed at our festivals. Where parents, guardians or carers do not wish photographs to be taken at all, then the responsible adult attending should ensure that their child is not included in official photographs. However, if parents agree to their children being included in an authorised, official photograph, they should notify the Festival Secretary, in writing, on or before the relevant entry deadline.
8. Some children and vulnerable adults may have specific needs in order to take part. If this is the case we ask the responsible teachers, parents, guardians and carers to contact the festival organisers prior to arrival. The festival actively seeks, wherever possible, to meet these needs but must know beforehand in order to prepare support, or to advise that help cannot be provided on this occasion. Please notify the Festival Secretary, in writing, of any specific needs on or before the relevant entry deadline.
9. The Festival's 'Child Protection Policy' and approach to 'Creating Safer Festivals for Everyone' are published explicitly in our syllabus, programme and website. By completing and signing the entry form (or ticking the appropriate box for online entries) all parents, guardians, carers and teachers of competitors under 18 (or vulnerable adults of any age) confirm that they give (or have obtained) the necessary consents for the competitors to take part in the festival. Without consent, entry to the festival cannot be accepted.

SUPPORT THE 2026 FESTIVAL

As a local festival dedicated to nurturing and promoting community talent, we rely greatly on the support of our community to continue providing valuable performance and development opportunities.

We warmly welcome: **Volunteers, Donations, Sponsorship and Advertising Support.**

If you, your family members, or friends are interested in supporting the Festival in any of the above capacities, please contact us with the following details:

Name:

Email / Tel:

Area of Interest:

- Advertising/ Sponsorship
- Donations
- Volunteering

We sincerely thank you for your support and look forward to working together to make the 2026 Festival a continued success.

FESTIVAL CONTACT

North East Piano Festival President: Sam Tse

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