

PRESS RELEASE

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## WINNER TAKES IT 'OWL': LARK MUSIC-MAKING COMPETITION ANNOUNCES 2025 PRIZE-WINNERS



Winners [L to R]: Amy Jerman; Llewella White; and Rob Johnston

- A student, a counsellor, and a former art teacher have been announced as winners of the first **Lark Music-Making Competition** – each winning £1,000 cash prize to catapult their creativity.
- The Competition, which is sponsored by **Lark Music Insurance**, was launched by **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** this spring to celebrate amateur music-making. It encouraged UK-based instrumentalists to submit a short recording of music inspired by birds.
- **AMY JERMAN**, a student from **Wareham, Dorset**, wins the 18-24 category for *The Starling*. The bittersweet composition for solo piano aims to bring awareness to both the birds' beauty and their plight as one of the UK's fastest declining bird species.
- The 25-39 category winner is **LLEWELLA WHITE**, a counsellor from **London**, who was similarly inspired by starlings. The birds' murmuration reminded her of the choices we make in love, to turn towards each other: her solo performance on harp reflecting this.
- Guitarist **ROB JOHNSTON**, a former art teacher from **Southsea, Hampshire**, wins the 40+ category for a performance inspired by nature's own orchestra: a 5am dawn chorus of woodland birds, heard during a camping trip near Petworth.
- The panel of expert judges featured musicians, broadcasters and producers from across the industry, including presenter **Tom Service**, violinist **Tania Davis**, and conductor **Enyi Okpara**.

## Three amateur musicians are letting their creative ambitions soar, thanks to winning the first Lark Music-Making Competition – a new initiative launched by Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and sponsored by Lark Music Insurance.

The **three prize-winners** have each won a **£1,000** to catapult their creativity – and all **30 finalists**, selected from almost 100 submissions, receive a year's subscription to **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Digital Concert** platform (RRP £170). Each of the 19 concert broadcasts are available to watch live and for 30 days. Upcoming highlights include performances from superstar baritone Roderick Williams OBE, and new music by composer Dani Howard from the BSO's Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth and saxophonist Jess Gillam.

Members of the judging panel – of eight industry experts, including broadcaster **Tom Service**, conductor **Enyi Okpara**, and violinist **Tania Davis** – individually assessed the recordings based on creativity, expression and musicality.

**Pianist Amy Jerman's** performance of a composition for solo piano – *The Starling* – was described by judges as “cinematic” and “incredibly well written”. Jerman was inspired to write the work while watching the birds on the Purbeck coastline after hearing a performance at the Swanage Jazz Festival.

Jerman, a student from **Wareham, Dorset**, is a composer and multi-instrumentalist whose love of music began aged 14 on receiving her first saxophone. Jerman's compositions have been awarded prizes by Bloomington Symphony (Indiana, US), Gonville & Caius, and MuseScore. A passionate advocate for arts and accessibility, she is a youth worker, a member of ABRSM's Youth Advisory Board and has worked with local music education providers. Jerman plans to use her winnings to experience more live music in person.

**Harpist Llewella White**, from **London**, experienced an awe-inspiring murmuration of starlings while walking through a field; the encounter influenced her work for solo harp, *Murmuration*. Judges commented that it was “beautiful to listen to” and was performed with “poise and confidence”, concluding that “the starlings are lucky to have this music written for them.”

White, who works as a counsellor and a manager, began to learn the harp as a student. When working in a central-London emergency department during the pandemic, she noticed an increase of birdsong in the city during COVID curfews, when the city went silent from human traffic. She is now merging the symbolism of birds as a form of transcendence with music for her first solo album 'When the Birds Came Out Again'.

**Guitarist Rob Johnston** was deeply moved by the power of a dawn chorus of woodland birds, heard while camping near Petworth, West Sussex. The experience inspired his work, *Mind the Birds*, which judges described as “engaging” and a “joyful controlled explosion of creativity and virtuosity [...] as rich as the dawn chorus itself!”

Johnston, a former art teacher from **Southsea, Hampshire**, has enjoyed a long and varied journey with music and plays guitar, piano, accordion and percussion. He has played in folk clubs, music venues and at various festivals and events around the South of England and hopes to use his prize money to fund a recording.

The competition was launched by **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** – one of the UK’s leading ensembles – in association with **Lark Music Insurance**, a specialist music insurer committed to supporting musicians at all levels and the generous sponsor of the competition’s prizes. The BSO creates a diverse mix of community music initiatives across the South West, from the **BSO Young Associate** programme – which supports aspiring community music leaders traditionally underrepresented in the classical music sector – to **Symphony from Scratch**, an inclusive music-making weekend that unites disabled and non-disabled professional and amateur musicians of all ages. Lark Music is a proud supporter of these two programmes.

**Lark Music-Making Competition Judge and Joint Head of BSO Participate, Lucy Warren**, said: *“We asked for creative responses to birdsong, and what an extraordinary outpouring we received! The range of personalities, expression, and sheer joy that we’ve witnessed has been amazing and evidence of music’s ability to lift us beyond ourselves. Thank you to everyone who submitted recordings, you were brilliant – and congratulations to Amy, Llewella and Rob for your winning entries.”*

**Lark Music Insurance’s Partnership Account Executive, Brian Hillstead**, said: *“Day in, day out Lark Music Insurance supports musicians to do what they do best – create music. It’s been humbling to witness such an incredible outburst of creativity, as we’ve seen almost 100 submissions from across the UK. We’re thrilled for Amy, Llewella and Rob, who will continue their musical story with their win – and say thank you to all entrants, for being part of this extraordinary celebration of amateur music-making this year.”*

**For further information, and to register interest in future competitions, please visit [bsolive.com/Lark](https://bsolive.com/Lark)**

**[ENDS]**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**For more information please contact:**

**Claire Rawles** | [crawles@bsorchestra.co.uk](mailto:crawles@bsorchestra.co.uk) | 07860 776646 or **Edward Christian-Hare** | [edward.christian-hare@premiercomms.com](mailto:edward.christian-hare@premiercomms.com) | 07870 859633

1. \*Note: £3,000 prize pot is split between three age categories. There is a £1,000 prize for winners in each age group: 18-24, 25-39 and 40 plus.
2. Winners  
 18-24 **Amy Jerman**: *The Starling* for solo piano  
 25-39 **Llewella White**: *Murmuration* for solo harp  
 40+ **Rob Johnston**: *Mind the Birds* for looped guitar
3. Judging panel:  
 Sound engineer **Chris Caton**  
 Violinist **Tania Davis**  
 Lark Music's **Brian Hillstead**  
 Lark Music's **Gordana Jevic**  
 BSO Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Enyi Okpara**  
 Broadcaster and writer **Tom Service**  
 BSO's Principal Cello, **Jesper Svedberg**  
 Joint Head of BSO Participate, **Lucy Warren**
4. High-resolution images [available here](#)  
 a) 18-24 winner Amy Jerman  
 b) 25-39 winner Llewella White  
 c) 40+ winner Rob Johnston
5. The Lark Music-Making Competition is grateful to the **Ralph Vaughan Williams Foundation** and **Oxford University Press** for use of *The Lark Ascending* in its promotional material.
6. **ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** | [bsolive.com](https://bsolive.com)

**Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | 2025/26 Artist-in-Residence — Roderick Williams OBE**  
**Principal Guest Conductor — Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE**  
**Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits OBE**  
**Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop | Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton**  
**Calleva Assistant Conductor – Enyi Okpara**

**One of the UK's best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is known for championing the role of culture in people's lives. Based at Lighthouse, Poole, the Orchestra is resident in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Yeovil, and performs in towns and villages across the region. A leading arts charity, it is the largest cultural provider in the South West of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.**

The Daily Telegraph described Mark Wigglesworth's opening performance as Chief Conductor in 2024 as "*a fine, fierce debut*". Celebrated globally for his outstanding musicianship, extraordinary interpretations, and breadth of repertoire, Wigglesworth's first season has magnified the BSO's reputation for the highest quality music-making. The Orchestra boasts an enviable list of named conductors, including Principal Guest Conductor Chloé Van Soeterstède, Marin Alsop, David Hill MBE, Kirill Karabits, and Andrew Litton.

In 2025/26, the BSO welcomes baritone **Roderick Williams OBE** as Artist-in-Residence: Williams performs five times across the season, including Zemlinsky's *Lytic Symphony*, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, and a 24-song cycle, *An English Winterreise*. The Orchestra also introduces **Dani Howard** as its Celebrated Composer, a series that shines a spotlight on new British music. It shares seven performances of Howard's music, including the UK premiere of her *Saxophone Concerto* with **Jess Gillam**. Further highlights of the season include debut performances from organist **Anna Lapwood**,

cellist **Hugo Svedberg**, guitarist **Plínio Fernandes**, viola player **Timothy Ridout**, among more. The Orchestra's celebrated **Digital Concert series** continues into its sixth year, with 19 live performances broadcast globally from Poole.

The Orchestra is celebrated for its pioneering community-based **BSO Participate** work, spanning partnerships with health and care providers to inclusive events in schools and with music education hubs. In the 2025/26 season, highlights include the expansion of its creative health programme with **Dorset County Hospital** and **Arts in Hospital** into further **Dorset HealthCare** sites, and an extension of its support for **Community and Wellbeing Orchestras** supporting a range of needs across the region from Bodmin, Boscombe and Bristol to Chard and Wincanton.

Following international attention for igniting change, **BSO Resound** — the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra, and winner of the 2019 Royal Philharmonic Society's Impact Award — continues to challenge perceptions. The group unites with Calleva Assistant Conductor Enyi Okpara and members of the **National Open Youth Orchestra** to share its live music in schools in 2025/26.

A National Portfolio of Arts Council England, the BSO is a registered charity and relies on generous philanthropic support from individual donors, gifts in wills, corporate partners, and charitable trusts and foundations. In 2024, the Orchestra was delighted to receive its largest ever funding pledge from a charitable trust: a grant award of £300,000 over three years (2025-27) from the **Garfield Weston Foundation** towards BSO Participate.

The BSO's Principal Broadcast Partner is **BBC Radio 3**.  
The BSO is **Classic FM's** Orchestra in the South of England.

## 7. **ABOUT LARK MUSIC INSURANCE** | [larkmusic.com](https://larkmusic.com)

Music brings people together like nothing else can – bridging cultures, languages, ages, and genders. For over 25 years, Lark Music has been protecting musicians to keep their treasured instruments and equipment safe.

By offering specialist, flexible and easy cover, we leave our customers free to focus on what is most important to them: making music happen, however they choose. Our passion for music inspires everything we do, not only from every policy that we place or our tailored service and personal touch but also through our support of the musical community with our partnerships, sponsorships, and belief in improving access to services and education for all music lovers.

Through our collaboration with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, we're continuing our commitment to supporting initiatives that nurture emerging talent, champion inclusivity, and create meaningful opportunities for musicians at all levels. We're helping to ensure that musicians don't just have the protection they need, but also the resources and opportunities to flourish, perform, and inspire. Like our customers, everything we do is for the love of music.

For more information about Lark Music, our musical insurance policies, and the support we give to the music industry, visit [larkmusic.com](https://larkmusic.com)