

VOCAL & MUSICAL THEATRE

including Junior and Adult Choral

Adjudicator: Ben Costello, MA, BMus, PgDip.

Closing date for entries: 16th November 2026

Venue: The Menuhin Room, Central Library, Guildhall Walk, Portsmouth, PO1 2DX.

Enter online at pfpa.org.uk
or send completed entry form and payment to:
c/o Shelley Hart, 26 Cedar Grove, Portsmouth,
Hampshire, PO3 6HJ.

Dates: 13/14th March 2027



Ben is an artistic director, musical director and singing coach, working nationally and internationally. He is Artistic Director and Company Secretary of Thames Concerts, Artistic Director of the City Music series, a generalist music adjudicator for the British and International Federation of Festivals, and a music examiner, consultant and recording artist for LCM Exams.

A specialist in musical theatre and vocal performance, Ben has been musical director for numerous productions across the UK, and a reflective product of this has been his continuing work as a musical director and singing teacher (incorporating Estill and Bel Canto) at the cutting edge of performing arts training in London, with his portfolio over the years including Arts Ed, Mountview Academy, Trinity Laban, Laine Theatre Arts, Italia Conti, Guildford School of Acting, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, the Royal Academy of Music, Drama Studio London, and the London School of Musical Theatre. At these colleges his work has included teaching singing technique, portfolio, acting through song, audition technique, and auditioning thousands of prospective students. Countless of his former singing students enjoy successful careers in the West End and beyond. He also teaches singing at Tiffin Girls' School.

Born and based in London, Ben trained initially as a flautist before majoring in piano, singing and conducting. He read Music at Kingston University and the London College of Music, subsequently joining the teaching staff as the College's first resident MD.

Ben remains much sought-after as an accompanist, and collaborates in a variety of genres with countless singers and instrumentalists in many performing environments, working with several distinguished singers including Michael Chance CBE, James Bowman CBE, Roderick Williams OBE, Robin Blaze, Hugh Cutting, Alison Pearce, Joanne Lunn, Peter Savidge, Richard Suart, Lotte Betts-Dean and Mark Dobell. He is also one of the regular pianists for Cantabile (The London Quartet).

Ben is a Liveryman and on the Court of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. He chaired the Company's prestigious annual musical direction scholarship for eight years, and is presently Chairman of the Company's Jazz Committee. For the Federation, he is also an adjudicator mentor, and is a member of the interviewing panel for potential new music adjudicators. He was a member of the Adjudicators' Council for 11 years, culminating in being elected Music Chairman, before stepping down in 2025.

Outside music, Ben is a keen motorcyclist.

Head of Section - Shelley Hart

As far as possible, adult classes will take place on the Saturday but there may be some exceptions to this. Please note on your entry form any unavailability.

There are also classes that include singing in the Speech & Drama and Dance Sections.

PLEASE NOTE:

- When choosing songs to perform, please ensure that the words contain no language likely to cause offense. In the Young Singers section, they should be appropriate for the age of the child. In the Adult section, remember that children may be present in the audience.
- A backing track for accompaniment may be used in any class except where indicated provided it is only instrumental music and there is no singing or backing vocals on it at all.

YOUNG SINGERS' CLASSES

The G M Velde Cup

will be awarded for the best performance by a singer aged 12 years and under.

The Portsmouth Music Club Anniversary Award

Will be awarded for the best performance by a Singer aged 13 - 18 years.

The Terri Freeman Cup

will be awarded at the discretion of the adjudicator for consistently high quality performances given by a singer in either the Young Singers or the Adult section.

CLASSICAL SOLO

Any song from the classical repertoire, not from a musical.

V01	12 years & under	Time limit 3 mins (A)	V02	13-18 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)
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MODERN SOLO

Any song from the popular music repertoire, not from a musical.

V03	8 years & under	Time limit 3 mins (A)	V05	13-18 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)
V04	9 - 12 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)			

VOCAL GROUP

Any song modern or musical theatre. Minimum of 2 singers, maximum of 6 singers.

V06	18 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)
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FOLK SONG

Any folk song traditional or modern, unaccompanied, or self-accompanied on a folk instrument, not a piano. No backing track.

V09	12 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V10	13-18 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)
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MUSICAL

Any song from a film musical or theatrical musical (not Disney).

V11	5 - 7 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V13	11-13 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)
V12	8 - 10 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V14	14-18 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)

JUNIOR CHOIRS

V15	Key Stage 1 Own choice of two contrasting songs	Time limit 5 mins (F)
V16	Key Stage 2 Own choice of two contrasting songs	Time limit 6 mins (F)
V17	Key Stages 3 & 4 Own choice of two contrasting songs	Time limit 8 mins (F)

CHARACTER SONG

Costume and props permitted. This song needs to be acted as the character selected. Please ensure song content is appropriate to the age group.

V18	8 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V20	13 - 18 years	Time limit 5 mins (B)
V19	9 - 12 years	Time limit 5 mins (B)			

DISNEY SONG

Any song from a Disney film or musical. No costume or props.

V21	8 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V23	13 - 18 years	Time limit 5 mins (B)
V22	9 - 12 years	Time limit 4 mins (B)	V24	Duet - 18 years & under	Time limit 5 mins (B)

LIEDER

Any song from the Lieder repertoire to be sung in German or English. No backing track.

V25	18 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)
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SACRED SONG

Any song with religious words. No backing track.

V26	18 years & under	Time limit 4 mins (B)
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MIXED BAG: either A or B

A: two songs: one from a musical and one from a different tradition

B: one 20th or 21st century song and one from any earlier period

V27	18 years & under	Time limit 8 mins (B)
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JUNIOR CLASSICAL RECITAL

Own choice of three contrasting songs to be introduced by the performer. Not pop or from a film or musical. No backing track.

V28	18 years & under	Time limit 12 mins (C)
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JUNIOR MUSICAL RECITAL

Own choice of three contrasting songs from different theatrical musicals to be introduced by the performer. No costume or props.

V29	18 years & under	Time limit 12 mins (C)
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ADULT CLASSES - 19 YEARS & OVER

Note that the Senior Citizen classes are for those aged 60 and over

PLEASE NOTE: when choosing songs to perform, please ensure that the words contain no language likely to cause offense. In the Adult section, children may be present in the audience.

The Ted Marsh Memorial Cup
will be awarded for the best overall performance in the Adult Vocal Section

The Kathleen Stace Rose Bowl
will be awarded to the overall winner of the Lady's and Gentleman's solo classes

The Terri Freeman Cup
will be awarded at the discretion of the adjudicator for consistently high quality performances in either the Young Singers or the Adult section

OWN CHOICE SOLOS

Any song not from an opera, oratorio or musical

V30 Lady's Solo Time limit 4 mins (B)

V31 Gentleman's Solo Time limit 4 mins (B)

V33 Senior Citizen's Solo Time limit 4 mins (B)

V34 Novice Class Time limit 4 mins (B)

For adult singers who have not previously won a class in any Festival and have not been receiving singing lessons for more than 18 months before the festival.

TRADITIONAL OR MODERN FOLK SONG

Unaccompanied, accompanied or self-accompanied. Own choice of any folk song.

V35 Folksong Time limit 4 mins (B)

SONGS FROM THE STAGE

V36 Songs from Shows and Films Time limit 5 mins (B)

Any song from a film or musical, including Disney.

No costume or props.

V38 Character Song Time limit 4 mins (B)

Any character song from a musical or light opera. Costume and props permitted. See rule 2.17.

V39 Operatic Solo - Open Time limit 5 mins (B)

Any voice, own choice from any opera or light opera, to be sung in the original language. No backing track.

ORATORIO, RELIGIOUS SONG OR SPIRITUAL

V41 Open. *No backing track.* Time limit 6 mins (B)

CLASSIC SONGS

V42 Classical American Song Time limit 4 mins (B)

No backing track.

V43 English Song Time limit 5 mins (B)

Any song by any English composer, excluding Michael Head. No backing track.

V44 Michael Head Song Time limit 5 mins (B)

Own choice of any song by Michael Head. No backing track.

V45 Ivor Novello Song - Open Time limit 5 mins (B)

Own choice of any song by Ivor Novello

V46 Comic Song Time limit 5 mins (B)

Any humorous song to entertain the audience

V47 Modern Popular Classics Time limit 4 mins (B)

Any Top Ten hit since 1960 as defined in Melody Maker.

Please ensure lyrics and song subject are appropriate for the occasion.

MIXED BAG, either A or B

A - One aria from oratorio or opera & one from a musical; B - One from arie antiche & one English art song. No backing track.

V48 Mixed Bag Time limit 8 mins (B)

CLASSICAL VOCAL RECITAL

Own choice of 3 songs of contrasting style (not popular culture) and period to be introduced by the performer. No backing track.

V49 Recital - Open Time limit 15 mins (E)

ENSEMBLES

V50 Lieder - Voice & Piano - open

Time limit 4 mins (B)

To be judged as an ensemble. Any song from the Lieder repertoire to be sung in German. No backing track.

V51 Free Choice Duet/Trio Time limit 4 mins (C)

Any duet or trio from any tradition.

Two/three distinct voice parts must be sung.

V52 Musical Duet Time limit 4 mins (C)

Any song from a film or musical. Two distinct voice parts must be sung.

V53 Vocal Group Time limit 4 mins (D)

Maximum of 4 singers. Any song arranged for a small vocal

group - not classical or traditional. Distinct parts must be sung. (e.g. Girls Aloud, JLS, Take That etc.)

V54 Vocal Small Choir (Contrasting songs)

Time limit 10 mins (G)

Minimum number 5 singers, maximum 10 singers.

Two contrasting songs, any genre or style.

V55 Vocal Small Choir (Acapella) Time limit 10 mins (G)

Minimum number 4 singers, maximum 10 singers.

Two contrasting songs, any genre or style.

V56 Vocal Choir (Acapella) Time limit 10 mins (G)

Minimum number 10 singers, maximum 20 singers.

Two contrasting songs, any genre or style.