



Leeds International Piano Competition announces pioneering learning, engagement and community projects

- **‘Stories from M&S Sheet Music: Leeds’ Piano Heritage’, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to bring community closer to historic sheet music held by Marks & Spencer Company Archive**
- **‘Skylar’s Missing Note’, a collaboration with Manic Chord Theatre and Leeds Music Education Partnership, to reach over 1,500 primary schoolchildren in Leeds**

The Leeds International Piano Competition, one of the world’s most prestigious music competitions, today announces two new learning, engagement and community projects, taking their commitment to making the piano as accessible as possible to new heights. As well as deepening its roots in the local Leeds community, these new initiatives from the Competition also aim to engage and excite new audiences with the piano.

The Competition has secured a grant of £7,100 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a partnership project with the Marks & Spencer’s Company Archive, aiming to bring the local community closer to their collection of historic sheet music. Sheet music was a bestselling product at Marks & Spencer during the 1910s and 1920s, at a time when gathering round the piano was a popular form of entertainment for most families; many stores would also have a pianist on the shop floor. As well as bringing people closer to how entwined piano music used to be to everyday life, the project will also bring the piano to the widest possible audience by taking the project directly into adult care/community settings throughout Leeds and a temporary public exhibition within the Marks and Spencer Archive.

Made possible by money raised thanks to National Lottery players, the project will work with Leeds City Council’s Complex Needs provision in eight weekly sessions commencing in September 2019, and participants will discover the varied genres of piano music within the collection, including marching songs, folk, operatic overtures and parlour music. After the eight weeks, participants will curate mini-recitals, as well as creating accessible and creative programme notes, to perform at three care/community settings in Leeds.

Students from the University of Leeds – a principal partner of the Competition – will record pieces from the Archive to be used in the sessions, and ten of these recordings will be kept and maintained within the Archive permanently. The recordings, along with the programme notes created by the participants, will also be available digitally for adult learning and community groups in the UK. A temporary exhibition of the project and its findings, including recordings, photographs and the original archive material, will be on display at the Archive between January and March 2020, expecting to reach over 4,000 visitors. As well as being able to explore the Archive, members of the public will also be able to engage with the music hands on – a piano will be installed in the temporary Archive for the public to try their hand at playing from the sheet music in the collection.

The Archive, housed in the Michael Marks Building at the University of Leeds, contains over 71,000 items, dating from 1884 to the present day. It comprises not only written, photographic and digital records of the Company's development, but also artefacts which represent key aspects of the Company's activities. Public admission to the exhibition is free and there is a programme of community events throughout the year for people of all ages to participate in.

Katie Cameron, Archive and Outreach Officer for the Marks & Spencer Company Archive, said: *"We're looking forward to working on this exciting project with LIPC. We know that music can benefit older people and those with dementia by reducing anxiety, lifting mood and helping to maintain speech and language. As well as the sheet music, we'll use archive objects as memory aids and conversation starters, as reminiscence can be a valuable activity for people living with dementia. The M&S Company Archive is full of treasures that can evoke memories and encourage conversations. This project is part of a wider community programme including outreach and exhibition visits, reminiscence resources and a monthly Memory Café."*

The Competition is also announcing a new primary school project, expanding on its previous successful school-based work. 'Skylar's Missing Note', a touring music and theatre experience in collaboration with Leeds-based Manic Chord Theatre and supported by Leeds Music Education Partnership and Arts Council England, will take over 1,500 Key Stage One pupils (ages 5-7) in 20 schools on an adventure with the main character, Skylar, whose piano has lost its middle-C key during a house move. This immersive piece of storytelling will not only introduce pupils to the piano in a fun and engaging way but is also designed to enhance the music curriculum. As well as participating in an interactive workshop following the performance, pre and post-activity resources will be created to help pupils understand and appreciate the inter-related dimensions of music and explore the world of the piano.

Sam Berrill and David Cartwright, co-Artistic Directors of Manic Chord Theatre, said: *"Music is a universal language and one which Manic Chord feel everyone should be exposed to. However, throughout history the arts have often found themselves at the bottom of the national curriculum pecking order. In our infancy the engagement with and understanding of music helps to shape a whole host of developmental skills, cognitive functions and social interactions."*

Whilst giving students an unforgettable, memorable and – for some – brand new artistic experience, the project aims to use an inventive music-driven storytelling to inspire younger generations to see learning as a multi-dimensional, creative and empowering adventure (as well as being incredibly fun!)."

Jenny Rogers, Learning and Engagement Director at the Leeds International Piano Competition, said: *"The Leeds International Piano Competition is delighted to be announcing these two new projects within our Learning & Engagement programme which we know will connect with new audiences and*

introduce them to the delights of the piano. We are thrilled to be working in partnership with these incredible organisations to create trail blazing new activities which authentically engage communities with the piano. This new work continues our commitment to championing access and enjoyment of the piano for all and are vital new projects to ensure The Leeds evolves to be so much more than a music Competition.”

These pioneering projects come shortly after the hugely successful learning and engagement activities of its annual Leeds Piano Festival in Leeds and London, in partnership with Wigmore Hall Learning, which reached audiences of over 4,000 people (75% being primary school aged). These included the Piano Fantasia, a hugely successful schools event at Leeds Town Hall for 1500 schoolchildren and 200 staff from 37 schools from Leeds, Bradford and Kirklees, featuring Young Scholars from the Lang Lang International Music Foundation. The Competition also delivered six in-school workshops linked to the Piano Fantasia, reaching 165 children; these sessions introduced pupils to the science and engineering of the piano. The Young Scholars performed at 14 different events throughout the Festival both in Leeds and London, including performances in a hospice, hospital, care home, and primary schools.

The Competition’s Piano Trail – placing 12 specially-decorated pianos throughout the city of Leeds in partnership with Leeds Business Improvement District and the University of Leeds – was also recently nominated in the CIPR Excellence Awards in the ‘Arts, Culture or Sport Campaign’ category. These Besbrode pianos, decorated by local artists, were a popular feature of last year’s Competition and encouraged the public to play and experience the pianos at high-profile locations around Leeds city centre. Most of the trail pianos stayed in place after the Competition due to the huge popularity of the initiative.

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Notes to Editors

The Leeds International Piano Competition

‘The Leeds’ is one of the world’s foremost music competitions. Since the first Competition in 1963, it has attracted the world’s finest young pianists, drawn by the opportunities offered by the outstanding prize package, unparalleled career-building possibilities, the challenge of demanding repertoire, a stellar jury – and a warm welcome from the city. A new vision for 2018 has seen The Leeds spread its wings. Internationally, First Rounds were held in Berlin, New York and Singapore. Locally, the first annual Leeds Piano Festival took place and partnerships were built and strengthened. The Competition’s Leeds roots have been deepened with Piano+, an imaginative programme of city-wide activity, and there is also a year-round Learning & Engagement programme.

The Leeds is led by Artistic Director Adam Gatehouse, and is honoured to have the support of Murray Perahia as Patron and Lang Lang as Global Ambassador.

<https://www.leedspiano.com/>

Manic Chord Theatre

Manic Chord is made up of co-Artistic Directors Sam Berrill and David Cartwright. They make universally themed work drawn from their shared curiosities of the world. Over the past 7 years Manic Chord has collaborated with a range of artists, partner organisations and community groups to develop bold, highly visual performance-led work for both national and international audiences. The company has produced a range of different work from theatre shows and performance lectures to online narratives.

The University of Leeds

The University of Leeds is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK, with more than 38,000 students from more than 150 different countries, and a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. It is a top 10 university for research and impact power in the UK, according to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, and in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings 2019. Additionally, the University was awarded a Gold rating by the Government's Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017, recognising its 'consistently outstanding' teaching and learning provision. Twenty-six of our academics have been awarded National Teaching Fellowships – more than any other institution in England, Northern Ireland and Wales – reflecting the excellence of its teaching.

The Leeds International Piano Competition and the University have worked together since the earliest days of the Competition, with the heats and events hosted on campus since the inaugural contest in 1963.

www.leeds.ac.uk

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future.

www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

The M&S Company Archive

The M&S Company Archive has a collection of more than 70,000 historic items and was unveiled at the University of Leeds' Michael Marks Building in March 2012. The permanent Marks in Time exhibition celebrates the role that M&S has played in peoples' lives since 1884 and charts the development of the iconic British retailer from its roots at Kirkgate Market to the present day. The Michael Marks Building at the University of Leeds opened to the public for the first time in March 2012 and has been the foundation for a broader partnership with the University of Leeds. Public admission to the exhibition is free and there is a programme of community events throughout the year for people of all ages to participate in. The M&S Company Archive offers an unrivalled insight into the company's corporate history with an extensive collection of clothing, toys, books, homeware, food packaging and company documents.