

Chair of Trustees Recruitment Pack

Leeds International Piano Competition

2026



THE LEEDS
INTERNATIONAL
PIANO COMPETITION



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

The Leeds International Piano Competition is a registered charity, no. 1073251

leedspiano.com

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The Leeds is one of the most prestigious competitions in the world. Just to be part of its legacy is extraordinary — **winning it completely changed my life.** It opened doors I never imagined and set me on an incredible journey.

Alim Beisembayev
Gold Medalist 2021



Join Us as Chair of Trustees



Leeds International Piano Competition

A globally acclaimed platform. A city-wide celebration. A movement for music with purpose.

Thank you for your interest in becoming Chair of Trustees for the Leeds International Piano Competition.

This is a rare and exciting opportunity to lead one of the world's most prestigious music organisations at a pivotal moment in its evolution — as we prepare for the next competition in 2027, expand our international reach, and deepen our role as a force for public good.

The Leeds is known globally for launching outstanding pianists — but we are also reimagining what a music competition can be. We bring world-class artistry to streets and schools. We champion creativity, connection and belonging. And we are shaping a new vision of Leeds as a Piano City — a place where music is accessible, visible, and proudly woven into civic life.

Our next Chair will help shape this vision: providing strong, strategic leadership; supporting an ambitious executive team; and acting as a confident advocate for our work across the cultural, philanthropic and civic sectors.

Fiona Sinclair
CEO

If you believe in the power of music to inspire, transform and connect — locally and globally — we would love to hear from you.



Key Facts



“This internationally prestigious competition... [is] **one of the world’s trailblazers** in a new breed of music competition.”

GRAMOPHONE
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

-  **10.5 million** global viewers in September 2024
-  **60+ years** of launching world-class pianists
-  **3,000+ children** reached through recent schools programmes
-  **28 public pianos** and an award-winning street festival
-  Vision: **Leeds Piano City** – from stage to society
-  Next milestone: **2027 Competition** and citywide Festival

Why This Role, Why Now?



“The Leeds stands among the **very top of prestigious piano competitions**, as is shown by the fact that the very best pianists worldwide all want to compete in it...”

The Daily Telegraph

The Leeds is entering a pivotal new chapter — one that combines global reach with deep community impact. In the next three years, we will:

- Deliver our most ambitious international Competition to date
- Expand our Creative Learning & Engagement work across the UK and globally
- Launch major fundraising and partnership campaigns
- Embed Leeds Piano City as a model for cultural placemaking

This is an opportunity to shape a bold and inclusive future for one of the world’s leading music competitions.

The Role of Chair of Trustees



As Chair, you’ll provide inspiring leadership to a multi-skilled Board, guiding strategic development, supporting an ambitious executive team, and championing our mission on local, national and international stages.

We are looking for a Chair who brings:

- Board-level leadership and a commitment to best-practice governance
- A strong belief in music as a force for civic and educational good
- The ability to think strategically and act ambassadorially
- Inclusive, collaborative instincts, with the confidence to guide and challenge constructively
- Experience or networks in one or more of: philanthropy, finance, law, digital innovation, education, or cultural leadership

Fundraising & Advocacy

The Chair will play an important role in supporting our fundraising and profile-building, including through attendance at events, ambassadorial duties and the Development Committee.

What You’ll Gain

This is a unique opportunity to:

- Shape the future of a globally respected cultural institution
- Help empower the next generation of pianists, educators and leaders
- Champion meaningful change in music education and civic life
- Grow your own strategic leadership and governance experience
- Connect with influential networks across the arts, education and philanthropy





A Legacy of Excellence

1963

A Vision Begins

The Competition is founded in Leeds by Dame Fanny Waterman, Marion Thorpe and Lady Roslyn Lyons. A bold platform for young pianists is born.

1978

Royal Patronage

HRH The Duchess of Kent becomes Patron, reflecting the Competition's cultural significance in the UK and beyond.

2005

Damehood for Our Founder

Dame Fanny Waterman is awarded a DBE for services to music, recognising her extraordinary vision and lasting influence.

2018

A New Era of Global Reach

First international rounds, global streaming, and new prize partnerships with major industry leaders transform our reach.

2023

Award-Winning Civic Impact

The Leeds wins the Royal Philharmonic Society Impact Award for its Piano Trail festival – music brought into public life.

2024

21st Competition attracts record applications and broadcast audiences, with 10.5 million views in 123 countries and 2.5 million live engagements in Leeds

Past prize-winners include Murray Perahia, Radu Lupu, Mitsuko Uchida, András Schiff, Lars Vogt, Sofya Gulyak, Eric Lu and Jaeden Izik-Dzurko.

Our Journey



Lang Lang
Global Ambassador



Murray Perahia
Patron

Founded in 1963, The Leeds International Piano Competition has grown into one of the world's most prestigious platforms for young artists – and a bold cultural force for good.

'Today, The Leeds is much more than a global top-3 music competition. We are a cultural movement – bringing music to streets and schools, empowering the next generation, and redefining what classical music can mean in the 21st century.'

Fiona Sinclair
CEO

Our Work Includes:

- The triennial Competition, discovering and launching exceptional artists
- A year-round Artistic Programme and career development offer
- A growing Creative Learning & Engagement strand reaching thousands of children, teachers and schools
- Public-facing initiatives like the award-winning Piano Trail, festival and Leeds Piano City

As we prepare for our next major cycles in 2027 and 2030, our strategic priorities are:

- Empowering Exceptional Talent
- Inspiring the Next Generation
- Igniting Discovery Locally
- Enhancing Long-Term Resilience



What It Means to Lead The Leeds

As a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, The Leeds is governed by a Board of Trustees who provide strategic direction, financial oversight, and external advocacy.

All Trustees are expected to:

- Contribute to strategic planning and decision-making
- Uphold the charity's legal and financial responsibilities
- Champion our mission and values
- Offer insight and experience to shape direction
- Act as advocates and grow our networks

The Chair's Responsibilities

The Chair leads the Board by:

- Facilitating effective, inclusive and well-governed Board meetings
- Acting as a strategic partner and critical friend to the CEO
- Representing the organisation externally at key events and forums
- Supporting a constructive Board culture, including Trustee development and succession planning.
- Helping secure strategic partnerships and philanthropic support

Term

- Three years, renewable once (maximum six years)

Governance Structure

Subcommittees include:

- Finance and Risk
- Fundraising and Partnerships
- Nominations and Appointments
- Creative Learning and Engagement

[View Our Charity Commission Profile](#)

How to Apply



“What greater and more touching pleasure is there in life than giving a young and beautiful talent **a little lift in the direction of the stars.**”

Dame Fanny Waterman
Co-founder

To express interest in the role of Chair of Trustees, please email...

Chair of the Recruitment Panel, Edward Appleyard
edward.appleyard@thackraymuseum.org

...with a short statement outlining your interest in the role and a CV or link to your professional profile.

We actively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, particularly those currently underrepresented in leadership within the arts and classical music sectors, and those whose lived experience reflects the communities we serve — in Leeds, across Yorkshire, and internationally.

We are committed to inclusive recruitment and welcome applications in alternative formats. If you would find an informal conversation helpful before applying, or have specific access needs, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Our journey continues. We hope you'll join us.



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Principal Partner



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



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CLASSIC FM

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B B C RADIO 3



Chair of the Board of Trustees

Role Description & Person Specification

Role Purpose

The Chair of Trustees provides strategic leadership and governance of the Leeds International Piano Competition (The Leeds), ensuring the organisation fulfils its ambition to harness the power of artistic excellence as a force for good.

In upholding the Competition's mission, the Chair will:

- Support the discovery, nurturing and launching of exceptional pianists
- Help create inclusive opportunities for talent to flourish
- Inspire global audiences, local communities and the next generation through the transformative impact of music

Responsibilities of the Chair

Strategy & Governance

- Lead the Board in effective consideration, development and approval of strategy proposed by the CEO, ensuring alignment with the charity's mission and values.
- Ensure the organisation operates efficiently and effectively to fulfil its objectives.
- Provide leadership, with the Board and CEO, in overseeing and safeguarding the financial sustainability of the Charity.
- Ensure high standards of governance, risk management and compliance with relevant charity and company legislation.
- Ensure the Board is as diverse as possible and provides the range of knowledge, skills and experience necessary to deliver the charity's aims.



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- Commit to regular reviews of Board performance, including succession planning and managing Trustee retirements and appointments.
- Lead Board meetings, encouraging inclusive discussion, summarising key points, and ensuring decisions are clear and implemented.

Guidance and Support to the CEO

- Act as line manager to the CEO, providing support, constructive challenge and guidance.
- Maintain a close, open and effective working relationship with the CEO, supporting delivery of the strategic plan.
- Offer counsel on operations, personnel and organisational development.

Fundraising & External Profile

- Support fundraising and development through ambassadorial activity, advocacy and network-building.
- Use personal and professional networks to help the CEO and fundraising team develop access to potential donors, partners and supporters.
- Provide advice and assistance in raising and maintaining the charity's profile.
- Attend events and functions on behalf of the organisation, including participation in the Development Committee.
- Act as a figurehead for the organisation where necessary, confidently representing its mission, vision and objectives across cultural, philanthropic, educational and civic sectors.

Financial Oversight

- Work with the Board and Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee to ensure sound financial planning, oversight and reporting.
- Oversee and approve the annual budget and ensure high standards of financial management.

Board Culture

- Foster a constructive and inclusive Board culture that supports effective decision-making.
- Uphold the highest standards of integrity and accountability.



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- Ensure the organisation remains accountable and transparent in all its activities.

Person Specification

We are particularly keen to hear from candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences. If you meet some, but not all, of these essential criteria, but feel you could contribute meaningfully to our work, we would be very interested to hear from you.

Leadership & Governance

- Proven experience of chairing boards or senior committees in the arts, education, charitable or related sectors.
- Strong understanding of charity governance, law and trustee responsibilities.
- Ability to lead strategic discussions and build consensus.

Strategic Vision

- Demonstrated ability to think strategically and contribute to long-term planning and sustainability alongside the executive team.
- Experience in overseeing organisational growth and development.

Advocacy & Ambassadorship

- Recognised and respected leader, able to represent the organisation credibly on national and international stages.
- Excellent networking skills with the ability to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.

Fundraising & Development

- Experience in supporting and contributing to fundraising, sponsorship and donor engagement.
- Confidence in engaging with high-net-worth individuals, corporate partners, trusts/ foundations and funding bodies.



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Commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- Strong commitment to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of organisational life.
- Sensitivity to the global nature of the Competition and awareness of cultural differences.

Personal Attributes

- Integrity, independence, fairness and sound judgement.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Inclusive, collaborative instincts with the ability to guide and challenge constructively.
- Passion for the piano and classical music, with a belief in the transformative power of the arts.
- Availability to commit sufficient time and energy to the role, including attending key events and meetings.

Term

- **Term of office:** Three years, renewable once (maximum of six years).

Governance Structure

Subcommittees include:

- Finance and Risk
- Fundraising and Partnerships
- Nominations and Appointments
- Creative Learning and Engagement

[View Our Charity Commission Profile](#)



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Application

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Thank you!