



IRISH HERITAGE

Registered charity number: 1189508

Irish Heritage Music Bursaries 2026/27

Irish Heritage is a registered charity, established in London in 1974, whose objective is to advance public education and appreciation of the arts, particularly those of Irish and Anglo-Irish music, arts, literature and drama of all genres and traditions to the benefit of the community.

It is the only Irish performing arts organisation in Britain dedicated to helping young Irish musicians and composers in the early part of their careers. It awards four valuable Bursaries annually; one for performance, one for composition, one for strings, another for vocal studies and a special accompanist's award.

Irish Heritage presents a programme of public events in established music venues and supports other organisations, including the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival that share its aims in music and the arts. It has links with Conservatoires in Ireland and Britain to identify emerging, talented young performers and composers.

The charity's values: *Creativity, Encouragement, Collaboration, Enjoyment and Inclusivity*, reflect the legacy inherited from its founders Ethna and Charles Kennedy and are the inspiration for the organisation's Outreach and Community programme, delivered in association with the Irish Cultural Centre and London Irish Centre, which brings the joy of live music to people who cannot normally access it, to children in education and to those who benefit from music as therapy.

Bursaries 2026/27

Irish Heritage is alert to the need to encourage young Irish performers and composers not only with performance opportunities but also with financial support as they transition from college to professional life. The charity's bursary programme is a key element in the provision of its support.

Thanks to the success of the organisation's fund-raising and to the support of generous donors and organisations such as the Ireland Funds, Irish Heritage is able to offer three valuable bursaries and a special accompanist's award for 2026/27.

Please read the information on the following pages carefully.

The Irish Heritage Music Bursary for Performance

The Music Bursary for Performance was first awarded in 2015 and already has a distinguished list of recipients. The bursary, worth £5,000, is awarded to a student who is Irish born or of Irish heritage continuing their music education in Britain. Students studying at the UK's leading music conservatoires and colleges are welcome to apply. The successful recipient also receives a London debut at an Irish Heritage event.

The Irish Heritage Bursary for Voice

The Brackaville Bursary for Vocal Studies which was launched in 2019, is open to students who are Irish born or of Irish heritage continuing their music education in Britain. It is awarded to the singer who performs best in the auditions. In addition to a cash award of £2,500, the recipient will receive a performance opportunity at an Irish Heritage event in London.

The Homan Potterton Bursary for String Instruments

This bursary was presented in summer 2021 by Alex Heusen in memory of Homan Potterton, a former Director of the National Gallery of Ireland and supporter of Irish Heritage. The bursary is open to students who are Irish born or of Irish heritage continuing their music education in Britain.

The bursary is awarded to the string player who performs best at the adjudication day in the Wigmore Hall in February. The recipient receives a cash prize of £3,000 and a performance opportunity at an Irish Heritage event in London.

The Accompanist's/Special Award

The Accompanist's or Special Award, associated with the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival, and valued at £500, will be presented to the accompanist or instrumentalist selected by the audition panel from those who have been shortlisted to audition at Wigmore Hall in February. The recipient must be a student who is Irish born or of Irish heritage continuing their music education in Britain.

Previous Recipients

The previous recipients of the Irish Heritage Music Bursary for Performance are:

2015/16	Maire Carroll (piano) and Carolyn Holt (soprano)
2016/17	Christopher Quaid (violin)
2017/18	Adam Heron (piano)
2018/19	Amy Gillen (flute)
2019/20	Mollie Wrafter (violin)
2020/21	Tiffany Qui (piano)
2021/22	Clara Siegle (piano)
2022/23	Luke Lally Maguire (piano)
2023/24	Gabriel Francis-Dehqani (cello)
2024/25	Dida Condria (piano)
2025/26	Seth Collin (cello)

The previous recipients of the Irish Heritage Bursary for Voice are:

2019/20	Ellen Mawhinney - Soprano
2020/21	Dominica Williams - Mezzo-soprano
2021/22	David Corr - Baritone
2022/23	Laura Aherne - Soprano
2023/24	Owen Lucas - Tenor
2024/25	Emily Hogarty - Mezzo-soprano
2025/26	Cuan Durkin - Tenor

The previous recipients of the Irish Heritage Bursary for Composition are:

2018/19	Niall Tormey
2019/20	Aran O'Grady
2020/21	Éire Lavery
2021/22	Michael Hughes
2022/23	Harry O' Connor
2024/25	Nicholas Gawley
2025/26	Ferdia Ó Cairbre/Donnchadh Mac Aodha

The previous recipients of the Homan Potterton Bursary for String Instruments are:

2021/22	Susannah Griffin (violin)
2022/23	Samuel Kane (violin)/Jamie Howe (viola)
2023/24	Sacha Bistany (guitar)/Jayden Lamcellari (cello)
2024/25	Eve Quigley (viola)
2025/26	Julieanne Forrest (violin)

The previous recipients of the Accompanist's Award are:

2018/19	Brian Hughes
2019/20	Justine Gormley
2021/22	Frasier Hickland
2022/23	Georgina Cassidy
2023/24	N/A
2024/25	N/A
2025/26	Elena Esposito

Special Awards (Sponsored by BVOF/West Wicklow Festival)

2018/19	Tara Viscardi (harp), Peter Harris (tenor)
2022/23	Maria O' Dea (bassoon)
2023/24	Fiachra de hOra (viola)
2024/25	Thomas Kelly (percussion)

Application Process for 2026/27

Applications will be submitted directly to Irish Heritage and reviewed by an external panel. Documents will be circulated to all UK conservatoires as in previous years, with 6-8 candidates invited to present a 20 minute recital at Wigmore Hall in February 2027.

(Accompanists wishing to be considered for the Accompanist Award should complete the application form and state their intention clearly where shown on the form. It is not possible for a pianist to compete for both the Irish Heritage Music Bursary and the Accompanist Prize.)

Applications should include:

- A supporting reference from the candidate's current tutor with information of major prizes, high profile performances, etc.
- Information on current funding/scholarships and related information
- Information about any financial hardship
- A personal statement from the performer
- A valid Irish passport

Please note that once submitted, candidates' programmes cannot be altered.

An application form accompanies this introduction and briefing document.

Eligibility

The Bursaries are open to students (instrumental or vocal) who are Irish born or of Irish heritage (with a valid Irish passport) continuing their music education in Britain at the following colleges in the 2026/27 academic year:

- Royal College of Music
- Royal Academy of Music
- Guildhall School of Music & Drama
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
- Royal Northern College of Music
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama
- Leeds Conservatoire

Candidates must demonstrate the highest level of performance and potential for a professional career. The recipients of the Bursaries will be expected to act as an ambassador both for Irish Heritage and the bursary programme.

Age Limit

There is no age limit for bursaries, the nominee must be studying at one of the listed conservatoires

Closing Dates for Nominations

Music Bursary for Performance	<i>14th December 2026</i>
Irish Heritage Bursary for Voice	<i>14th December 2026</i>
Accompanist's Award	<i>14th December 2026</i>
The Homan Potterton Bursary for String Instruments	<i>14th December 2026</i>

Audition Process (preliminary round)

- Candidates must submit a video of them performing 2 contrasting works via YouTube/Vimeo Link, each piece no longer than 5 minutes in duration. If a longer clip is submitted, please specify the section you would like the panel to hear.
- You will also be required to submit a proposed 20 minute Audition Programme for the final round. This programme must include a composition by an Irish composer.
- Final round auditions will take place in **February 2027** (date tbc) at Wigmore Hall and recipients will be announced via the Irish Heritage website and individual emails.

Audition Panel

As in previous years a distinguished panel drawn from current, experienced, professional musicians will adjudicate the bursaries.

Completed nomination forms should be sent to:

Email: tara.viscardi@irishheritage.org.uk

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