



SINFONIA
SMITH SQ.



PETER HULSEN ORCHESTRAL SONG AWARD APPLICATION PACK

PETER HULSEN ORCHESTRAL SONG AWARD

Are you a graduate singer? Would you enjoy the opportunity to perform with an orchestra? Now is your chance, as Sinfonia Smith Square welcomes applications for the prestigious Peter Hulsen Orchestral Song Award.

The winner will not only win a prize of £1000 but also become an Associate Artist of Sinfonia Smith Square for 2026–27, resulting in at least one public performance with the orchestra in June 2026.

BACKGROUND

Established in 2008, the Peter Hulsen Orchestral Song Award is a biennial award for outstanding young singers embarking on the profession. While the Kathleen Ferrier Award is for recital with piano and Cardiff Singer of the World for operatic arias, the Peter Hulsen Orchestral Song Award distinctly offers emerging artists a much-valued opportunity to explore the treasures of the orchestral songbook and perform with Sinfonia Smith Square.

The award is named after the late Peter Hulsen, a remarkable music lover and longstanding friend and supporter of Sinfonia Smith Square. A native of Breslau, Peter came to England as a boy on one of the last Kindertransport trains out of Germany. In the face of such stark origins in life, he found great consolation in classical music and its enduring spirit manifest in outstanding young artists who may champion it for decades to come. In his lifetime, it was his wish to establish an award offering young voices the opportunity to perform with orchestra, and it has been Sinfonia Smith Square's honour to make this happen every alternate year.

The Award is adjudicated by Sinfonia Smith Square Founder Director Simon Over alongside distinguished specialists who in previous years have included Sir Thomas Allen, Sally Matthews, Della Jones, Andrew Staples, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Susan Gritton, and Paul Nilon. The 2026 panel will be announced shortly.

Previous winners are baritone Sam Hird (2024), soprano Chloe Morgan (2019), mezzo-soprano Lotte Betts-Dean (2017), soprano Soraya Mafi and bass-baritone Bozidar Smiljanic (2015), baritone Gavan Ring (2013), soprano Susanna Hurrell (2011) and baritone Gerard Collett (2009).



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Orchestral song demands both great artistry and great singing. Listening to these wonderful young singers specifically for orchestral song is a fantastic way to find our great artists of the future.

SUSAN GRITTON
SOPRANO

WHO CAN APPLY?

Singers who have completed a postgraduate course at a British music college in the last ten years may apply.

Additionally, the Heads of Vocal Studies at nine UK conservatoires – Birmingham Conservatoire, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Royal Northern College of Music, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Trinity Laban and the Wales International Academy of Voice – are invited by Sinfonia Smith Square to nominate one outstanding postgraduate student each. If you are nominated in this way, please nonetheless complete the application form to ensure we get all the details we need from you. Please note, it is not otherwise possible to apply as a student, but do consider applying in a future year when you have completed your studies.

If shortlisted, all applicants must be available on **Thursday 16 April (Piano Round), Tuesday 2 June, Wednesday 3 June (rehearsals with orchestra) and Thursday 4 June (public performance at Smith Square Hall, with orchestra)** in order to be able to participate fully. These dates will take place at Sinfonia Smith Square's home, Smith Square Hall, in central London, or at alternative venues nearby.

It is not essential that you are currently living in the UK but you must be able to attend all the dates above, at your own expense.

Please note you must also have your own accompanist available to join you if selected for the Piano Round on 16 April.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Graduate singers who are interested in applying must submit the following items:

- a completed application form (see below)
- recent filmed footage of yourself in performance (see below)
- a recent colour photo (headshot) of yourself (up to 2mb)
- your up-to-date CV (strictly no more than two pages)

The application form requests details of two referees, stating their name, role, how they know you (e.g. teacher) and contact details. The first of these should be your most recent singing teacher. You should alert both that you are including them as referees, and Sinfonia Smith Square may contact them at any time for their view on your singing ability.

The application form asks you to list 10 minutes' worth of repertoire that you would sing if shortlisted for the Piano Round in April. This should ideally be orchestral song, but not opera. We recommend you choose multiple pieces that demonstrate different vocal qualities. If you prepare in excess of 10 minutes' music, the panel may only choose to hear select passages. The repertoire you choose here need not be the same pieces you would sing if selected to proceed to the public performance with orchestra on 4 June, but it is worth bearing in mind that this performance will be with a chamber orchestra so what you choose to perform should be suitable for chamber orchestra forces.

All applicants must submit recent filmed footage of themselves in performance. This can be anything from Baroque through to contemporary music. You can either specially film it or it can be from a solo performance you have recently filmed, such as a final recital. The footage should be no longer than five minutes. Please ensure it is of good quality and accurately represents your ability as a musician. Please note we cannot accept purely audio recordings; it must be filmed footage in which you are clearly visible.

You should upload the footage using YouTube, Vimeo, or an equivalent site which makes it instantly accessible (rather than something that requires a download or password), then include the link to it in your application form. Wherever possible, please ensure the composer and title of the pieces you are singing are included in the video's title or description.

The footage should remain fully accessible online until the end of April. Before sending us the link, please check that your footage is definitely visible, ensuring that you have deactivated privacy settings so that we can view it easily.

If there is any reason why your circumstances may not enable you to submit filmed footage as described above, please contact us at auditions@sinfoniasmithsquare.org.uk.

All applications must be submitted by 12.00 noon (GMT) on Friday 27 February 2026. We regret that incomplete or late applications cannot be considered.

Applications will then be reviewed, and we will contact you the following week to let you know if you have been shortlisted to participate in the Piano Round on 16 April.

You must bring your own accompanist to the Piano Round. You will have the opportunity to warm up briefly together in an adjacent room prior to your audition.

Following the Piano Round, we will contact you to let you know if you have been chosen as the winner and will therefore be performing in June. If you have been successful, we will arrange for you to talk with Simon Over to agree a programme which should be suitable for Sinfonia Smith Square's chamber orchestra forces.

While we regret it is not possible to provide feedback for all applicants, those who have participated in the Piano Round may request feedback from the panel, and we will aim to supply some insightful and constructive observations from them that we hope will be of use to you. If you would like this feedback, please email auditions@sinfoniasmithsquare.org.uk after the Piano Round with the following subject heading: Feedback – Forename Surname. It may take some time before we can send you feedback, so thank you for your patience.

If you have any queries about applying for the Peter Hulsen Orchestral Song Award, you are warmly welcome to email us on auditions@sinfoniasmithsquare.org.uk and we will be happy to help you.



TIPS FOR VIDEO FOOTAGE

Please do not submit a professional, studio produced video. The most important thing is that your singing is well represented. If you are specially filming for your application, there are a few easy tips to consider when creating your footage which will help you to present yourself in the best possible way.

- Use a room with a good acoustic
- We recommend using a digital camera or phone camera
- Listen back with a good pair of headphones to check you are happy with the sound quality. It doesn't have to be of professional quality, but should allow the listener to easily and clearly hear your playing
- Use a tripod, or place your camera/phone on a flat surface, so your footage is stable
- Ensure that you can be seen in the frame, not so close that any of you is cropped out but not too far back either. We need to be able to clearly see that it is you singing



APPLICATION TIMELINE

January 2026: Applications open

Friday 27 February 2026: Applications close

Thursday 16 April 2026: Piano Round

Thursday 4 June 2026: The winner performs in a public concert alongside Sinfonia Smith Square