

STELLA JOCKEL
YOUNG COMPOSER COMPETITION
2026-27

organised by
SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS

COMPETITION ENTRY PACK

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus seeks submissions from composers in the early stages of their careers for the Stella Jockel Young Composers Competition 2026-27.

The competition is named for Stella Jockel, a former Sheffield teacher and vicar's wife who sang alto with Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus for many years. Part of Stella's generous legacy to the Chorus is being used to fund the competition. The aim is to support the creation and performance of new choral repertoire and to encourage and support young people from South Yorkshire who are studying seriously for, or starting out on, a career in music composition and/or performance.

The competition is open to young people aged 18 to 35, who currently live or study anywhere in South Yorkshire, or who lived, were born, or were educated there. The requirement is for a short choral work for a mixed choir, to be sung unaccompanied in at least four parts - soprano, alto, tenor, bass.

The text to be used was commissioned from Kayo Chingonyi, award-winning Zambian British poet and editor and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Kayo won the Geoffrey Dearmer Prize in 2012, and both the Dylan Thomas Prize and a Somerset Maugham Award in 2018.

The winning work will be performed at a special prize-winning event to be held on Saturday 24 April 2027 in the beautiful acoustic of St Marie's cathedral in Sheffield, which many consider to be just about perfect for the performance of unaccompanied choral works.

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus Music Director Darius Battiwalla will lead the panel of judges, which will also include Frances Cook and Thom Meredith. The winning entries will be announced late February or early March 2027.

Deadline

Midnight on 08 January 2027

Eligibility

The competition is open to young musicians aged between 18 and 35 inclusive, who were born in South Yorkshire or who study, live or work, or who used to study, live or work in South Yorkshire. Applications from previous entrants are welcome, except for previous first prize winners, who are not eligible to enter.

Prizes

1st prize

- £1,500.
- Performance of the winning work by Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus in a special concert at St Marie's cathedral at 7pm on Saturday 24 April 2027.
- Six free tickets for the concert.

2nd prize

- £1,000
- Five free tickets for the concert.

3rd prize

- £500
- Four free tickets for the concert

Judges

Darius Battiwalla, conductor, organist, Music Director Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus

Frances Cook, choral conductor and singer

Thom Meredith, choral conductor and singer

Electronic submissions

To the Competition Organiser Anne Adams at youngcomposer@sheffieldphil.org. Anne will assign numbers to each submitted score to ensure judging is anonymous.

Composition brief

- An original choral work for a large (160 singers) symphonic mixed choir to sing, unaccompanied, in at least 4 parts (SATB).
- Duration at least 4 minutes and under 10 minutes.
- Text to be used is '*Postcard from Sheffield*' by ©2026 Kayo Chingonyi. The poem is provided on the website and as a written document (pdf file).
- Works must be original, not premiered and not previously awarded before at any other competition.
- Arranged or adapted versions of previous works by the same composer and which have been already released or published won't be accepted.

The works will be judged on the basis of their response to the poem, practicality / vocal writing, presentation, and originality (ie, freshness of conception and approach, not necessarily whether the work is technically or aesthetically ground-breaking). Submissions that do not meet the composition brief listed above will not be considered.

Application requirements

Applicants must submit **all four** of the following items to the Competition Organiser, using the email address overleaf:

- Original choral score, to be sent as a pdf file. Each composition must be submitted with numbered pages. They must be legible, clear, without mistakes or amendments.
The score must not be marked with the composer's name, or in any way that would enable the composer to be identified. A piano reduction may be included and would be useful but is not a requirement and won't affect the judging.
- Completed application form – download from
- 250-word maximum biography in DOC or PDF format
- Photograph (JPEG or TIF file)

***Postcard from Sheffield* by ©2026 Kayo Chingonyi**

The poem is available on the website and can be downloaded from:

<https://sheffieldphil.org/postcard-from-sheffield-by-kayo-chingonyi/>

Competition rules

1. Submissions must meet the listed Composition Brief, eligibility criteria and Application Requirements.
2. Materials will not be returned.
3. The composition will be the property of the composer; however, first performance rights are granted to Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus.
4. Applicants waive all rights for publication, broadcasting, and recording of the premiere performance.
5. The decisions of the judges are final.
6. The judges reserve the right not to award one or more prizes if the standard is not sufficiently high, commensurate with the value of the prizes.
7. Applicants may submit up to two applications if they wish.
8. For each submission applicants must only use the text '*Postcard from Sheffield*' by ©2026KayoChingonyi; the poem is copyright and may not be used for any other purpose.
9. A condition of entry is that submitted biographies and photographs may be used in the publication of shortlisted applicants.
10. The judges, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus and St Marie's cathedral cannot be held responsible for any damages, claims, liabilities, and costs, or losses of any kind or nature whatsoever, which may in any way arise from the rehearsals, performance and recording of the competition entries.
11. Applicants accept the above rules unconditionally and without reservation.

Notification

Prize-winners will be announced to the public at the concert on 24 April 2027. Shortlisted candidates will be publicised in late February or early March 2027, and prize-winners notified in March 2027. All applicants, including those who are unsuccessful, will be provided with brief feedback.

FAQs

1. When is the competition deadline?

Entries must be submitted by midnight on 08 January 2027.

2. Is there an age limit?

Entrants must be between 18 and 35 years of age inclusive at the time of the deadline.

3. Can I submit more than one entry?

You may submit up to two entries. Each must be submitted separately accompanied by a fresh application form.

4. Can previous applicants apply again? Previous first prize winners are not eligible to apply. However, other prize winners, as well as previous unplaced applicants, are eligible to apply.

5. Can I send you my music at other times of the year?

Apologies but no. Compositions can only be considered in the context of the competition.

6. What type/genre of music can I submit?

The Chorus is South Yorkshire's foremost symphonic choir, which sings at major venues with national and international orchestras led by world class conductors. Choral compositions should be in keeping with the aim for an excellent choir of around 120 singers to perform the winning work at a classical music concert. We recommend that you submit your best work.

7. Will the scores be anonymised before being shared with judges?

Yes. For this reason, submitted compositions must not include the name of the composer, nor any other marking that could reveal their identity.

8. Can I submit my entry by post?

Unfortunately, we are unable to accept postal submissions. Please send all requirements electronically, to youngcomposer@sheffieldphil.org

9. How many prize-winners will be selected?

There will be three prize-winners, winning £1,500, £1,000, and £500.

10. Who will perform the winning work on 24 April 2027?

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus has organised the competition and will perform the winning composition at a special concert to be held in St Marie's cathedral on 24 April 2027. There are likely to be at least 120 singers performing the winning work. Read more about the Chorus below, and at www.sheffieldphil.org

11. I am not a UK citizen, can I apply?

Yes, as long as you have lived, studied or worked in South Yorkshire.

12. How much does it cost to apply?

Competition entry is free.

13. Can I claim travel expenses to attend the performance?

The competition organisers do not pay expenses, whether for travel to attend performances or for any other purpose.

14. When will applicants be notified?

Applicants will be notified by late February or early March 2027.

15. Can I ask for feedback about my submission?

All entries will receive feedback from the judges as part of the notification procedure. However please note that judges are unable to respond to requests for additional feedback.

For further enquiries please contact youngcomposer@sheffieldphil.org

Stella Jockel



Stella was born in Sheffield in 1932. She grew up and lived in the Hillsborough and Wadsley Bridge areas until her late 40s and worked as a primary school teacher in the city until taking early retirement. She sang in her local church choir, first at Wadsley Bridge, then, after marrying Alan Jockel, at All Saints Totley where he was the vicar. Stella became the church choir mistress and really enjoyed working with young voices as well as encouraging young organists. In her later years she

also helped with music at Beauchief Abbey.

Singing was her main passion, but she also loved travelling, birdwatching, walking and the countryside, and she lent her support to organisations concerned with protecting nature into the future.

Stella sang as an alto with the Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus for over 60 years, joining up in 1952 aged just 20. One of her first concerts was Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, with Kathleen Ferrier and the Hallé orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli at the new Festival Hall in London. This work became her favourite piece of music, and she sang it with the Chorus in 1964, on the highly-acclaimed Warner Classics recording with Dame Janet Baker and the Hallé orchestra and choir, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli.

More latterly Stella was involved in several trips made by the Chorus to Bochum, which was twinned with Sheffield after the Second World War. She welcomed and helped with hosting choirs from Bochum on their return visit to Sheffield. The relationship with Bochum meant a lot in those post-war years, and has continued ever since, with joint performances as recently as 2021 when the Bochum choir sang *Messiah* with the Chorus in Sheffield City Hall.

Stella retired from the Chorus in 2013 due to health issues affecting her balance and died in 2020, aged 88. It is entirely fitting that part of her generous bequest to her beloved Chorus will be used to support young composers via this competition. She would have been thrilled.

Darius Battiwalla

Darius is music director of Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus. He prepares the choir for visiting orchestras and conductors, and has conducted performances with the Halle, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Northern Sinfonia and Manchester Camerata. Since he took over, the choir has performed from memory for the first time and has appeared at the Proms and on Chandos recordings with the BBC Philharmonic. He recently directed the Chorus with Black Dyke Band in premiere recordings of the brass arrangement of Rutter's *Gloria*, Paul Mealor's new work *Paradise*, and in a CD of Christmas music which included several of his own arrangements.



He is a regular guest chorusmaster or conductor with choirs such as the Northern Sinfonia Chorus, Leeds Philharmonic Chorus, Huddersfield Choral Society, CBSO chorus and Netherlands Radio Choir. As Leeds City Organist, Darius gives regular recitals in the Town Hall. He has appeared as organ soloist with the Halle and London Philharmonic Orchestra, is a regular orchestral organist and pianist for the BBC Philharmonic and Halle orchestras and gives organ recitals across the country.

Frances Cook

Frances is a veteran of the UK choral scene, both as singer and conductor.



She was a Choral Scholar under John Rutter at Clare College, Cambridge and subsequently sang with the UK's finest chamber choirs, including Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen and the BBC Singers. She fell (or rather, was pushed) into choral conducting by accident, stepping into the breach to take a rehearsal of Tallis's *Spem in Alium* for Richard Hickox in the 80s when she was merely expecting to be singing in Choir 1! Not long after that, she became principal Chorus Master for the St Endellion Festivals in Cornwall and also Director of the Chester Festival Chorus. In those roles she

has prepared choirs for the likes of Richard Hickox, Martyn Brabbins, Vasily Petrenko, Yan Pascal Tortelier, John Wilson, Paul Daniel and Ryan Wigglesworth amongst many others.

She has worked extensively with Huddersfield Choral Society and also with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus and the BBC Symphony Chorus, but most closely with the Hallé Choir as their Director from 2010-12 and then as Associate Choir Director, working closely with Sir Mark Elder.

Thom Meredith (MA Oxon)

Thom has been involved with vocal and instrumental music all his life; both as a performer and educator.



Whilst reading music at Brasenose College, Oxford he was awarded an Exhibition as conductor of the Chapel Choir, also studying singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Following a PGCE qualification from the University of Leeds he taught music in schools in Yorkshire from 1988 until 1999 before being appointed to Kirklees Music School (now Musica Kirklees) as first Assistant and then Principal.

In addition to his passion for conducting choirs - Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, Colne Valley Boys and Yorkshire Philharmonic Choir since 1989, 2010 and 2023 respectively

- Thom has established a reputation as a baritone soloist and has performed various works from well-known choral works and song cycles to new compositions.

Now a freelance conductor and singer, Thom also arranges, teaches, leads workshops and runs courses and masterclasses.

Kayo Chingonyi



Kayo Chingonyi FRSL was born in Zambia in 1987 and moved to the UK at the age of six. He is a fellow of the Complete Works programme for diversity and quality in British Poetry and of The Civitella Ranieri Foundation. In 2012, he was awarded a Geoffrey Dearmer Prize by The Poetry Society and was Associate Poet at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in 2015. His first full-length collection, *Kumukanda*, won the Dylan Thomas Prize and a Somerset Maugham Award and is now a set text on the IGCSE syllabus.

Kayo was a Burgess Fellow at the Centre for New Writing, University of Manchester before joining Durham University where he is Associate Professor of Creative Writing. He was a writer and presenter for the music and culture podcast Decode and is poetry editor for Bloomsbury. His most recent collection *A Blood Condition* was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection, the T.S. Eliot Prize, and the Costa Poetry Award. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2022. His first work of non-fiction, a memoir entitled *Prodigal*, is forthcoming from 4th Estate.

Kayo Chingonyi photograph taken by Matthew Thompson

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus is South Yorkshire's foremost large mixed-voice chorus, performing regularly with leading orchestras including the Hallé, the BBC Philharmonic, the Northern Sinfonia and Manchester Camerata, as well as with internationally renowned conductors such as Gianandrea Noseda, Markus Poschner, Nicholas Kraemer, Sophie Jeannin and David Hill.

The Chorus performs with Orchestra in Residence the Hallé and acclaimed soloists as part of the Sheffield International Concert Season at Sheffield City Hall and at other venues around the United Kingdom. It has participated in The Proms on a number of occasions and has developed touring and performance links with the Philharmonischer Chor based in

Bochum, one of Sheffield's twin towns in Germany, and with the Ensemble Vocal Perigueux based in Perigueux, France.



The Chorus presents a challenging and exciting programme under the joint patronage of BBC Radio 3's Petroc Trelawny and acclaimed actor Samuel West, and the vibrant and inspiring leadership of its Music Director, Darius Battiwalla.

Recent performances include Verdi *Requiem*, Haydn *Creation*, Mendelssohn *Elijah* and Mahler Symphony Number 2. A mini-tour of Mozart's *Requiem* with the Flemish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kristiina Posker in London, Edinburgh and Sheffield attracted rave reviews; see <https://sheffieldphil.org/stunning-reviews-for-mozart-requiem-mini-tour>. The 2026-27 season will feature Verdi *Requiem* as the finale of the Classical Sheffield Weekend Festival, *Messiah* with Manchester Camerata and *Carmina Burana* with The Hallé.

The Chorus is always keen to welcome new members in all voice parts, but especially tenors. If you love singing and would like to perform on stage with a large symphonic choir, you are welcome to try the Chorus out any Tuesday evening. Visit www.sheffieldphil.org for further details, and contact newmembership2018@sheffieldphil.org