

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards

PRESS RELEASE

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The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Music Shortlist Artists Announced

The Arts Foundation announces the four Shortlisted Artists of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Music, one of the UK's leading fellowships for artists.

Nneka Cummins, Cassie Kinoshi, William Marsey, and Sasha Scott have been shortlisted for the prestigious £20,000 Arts Foundation Futures Award 2026 for Music.



Image credit: Nneka Cummins _ 'finding gills'[when they try to drown you] at Smith Square Hal (c) Dimitri Djuric __ nonclassical

This year's Music Award supports exceptional composers scoring contemporary classical across genres, including electronic and interdisciplinary practice.

The independent Jury members are Suzy Klein, Head of Arts and Classical Music TV, BBC; Rakhi Singh, Violinist, creative director and composer; and Tom Service, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster, who said:

"It has been extraordinarily humbling reading about and listening to the work of musicians nationwide. The calibre of work was so high. The shortlisted artists, Nneka, Cassie, William and Sasha all share, in different ways, a sense that they are at a pivot point in their careers, asking critical questions about the essence of contemporary classical music. The wide range of voices and experiences that the whole shortlist represents is fantastic. It highlights why awards like this are so vital in the landscape today. As a jury, we are hugely excited to follow their respective next steps."

Jury member Suzy Klein said:

"It has been such a pleasure to join the jury for this year's Arts Foundation Futures Awards. It was unbelievably exciting to see the quality of work that is being produced across the UK. There were so many composers with such wonderful natural talent and distinctive voices, making extraordinary, alluring, high-quality work. There are some people I felt we might genuinely lose from the profession, and I thought that would be appalling if they stopped composing because they cannot afford to do this anymore. All the shortlist demonstrate the need for these no-string-attached awards so clearly."

Jury Member Rakhi Singh added:

"I felt that all the artists have unique personalities and display such strong character in their music. There was such an interesting range of compelling originality, distinctive styles and voices. As a musician myself, I completely understand the drive and need to carve out time to develop one's musicianship. It was so clear that all the shortlisted composers were at a critical transition moment in their practice, whether working towards recording their first album or their first international performance - I am excited to see what emerges from this vital support."

Nneka Cummins

Nneka Cummins is a composer and producer, their practice has a focus on groove-inspired music which uses extended techniques to add colour and percussiveness and explores the idea of deconstruction and re-examination through sampled electronics. They curate new sonic combinations resulting in timbral blends that form original sound worlds and often incorporate organic, flowing melodies in their work. Nneka composed *Finding Gills [when they try to drown you]* for orchestra and electronics, which won Best Large Ensemble Composition at The Ivors Classical Awards 2025. Nneka completed their MA in Composition at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2022. They were awarded the Liverpool Philharmonic's Rushworth Composition Prize in 2021 and a Paul Hamlyn Artist's Award in 2023. Nneka is one of the composers on the 2026 RPS Programme and will write for Manchester Camerata, premiering in June 2026.

Cassie Kinoshi

Cassie Kinoshi is a Mercury Prize-nominated (2019) and Ivors Academy Award-winning (2018) Berlin/London-based composer, arranger and alto-saxophonist with a focus on creating multidisciplinary and genre-blending performance work across contemporary classical music, jazz/improvised music, film, television and visual-art contexts. As a bandleader, she writes for and performs with her eleven-piece ensemble seed., featuring many of London's leading improvising musicians. She is a composition graduate of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where she studied with Andrew Poppy and Stephen Montague. An in-demand composer for contemporary dance, theatre, film and visual art, her production credits include Park Avenue Armory NYC (*Euphoria*), National Theatre (*Top Girls*, dir. Carolyn Churchill), the Globe Theatre (*The Tempest*, dir. Sean Holmes), BalletBoyz (*England on Fire*, Bradley 4:18) and the Southbank Centre (*The Nutcracker*, dir. Drew McConie). Cassie also currently holds a significant role as an Artist-in-Residence at the Southbank Centre (2025-2028).

William Marsey

William Marsey is a UK-based composer. His music has been described as vivid, unsettling, distinctive and strangely touching. William's music has been commissioned and performed internationally, including by the LA Phil and BBC Arts, with performances by Royal Northern Sinfonia, The Hallé, and Thomas Adès. William was born in Hartlepool and studied composition at the University of Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He was nominated for a British Composer Award in 2018 and an Ivor Novello Composers Award in 2023. He is currently showing a unique, generative soundtrack, which changes week to week as part of [Cicadian Bloom at Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea](#), open until 22 March 2026. William will present the US premiere of [Man with Limp Wrist at LA Phil](#) on 6-8 February 2026, followed by a presentation in Oslo, with Norwegian Radio Orchestra, cond. Finnegan Downie-Dear on 9 September 2026. He will also share a full concert of his piano works at 1901 Arts Club, with Joseph Havlat on 9 June 2026, and a concert of his songs with Shadwell Opera in Summer 2026.

Sasha Scott

Sasha Scott is a composer, electronic artist and violinist born and based in London. Her work moves between acoustic and electronic, often merging the two to create hypnotic, dark, metallic sound worlds that blur the lines between the organic and the synthetic. She has collaborated with and been commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, 12 Ensemble, Aurora Orchestra, Sean Shibe, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Beijing Music Festival, and Her Ensemble, with performances across Europe, the USA, and Asia. She has performed solo live electronic sets at Hackney Empire (alongside the London Symphony Orchestra), the Purcell Room, The Pickle Factory, and TACO!. Her solo EPs, *Spiral* (2023) and *Angel* (2024), were both featured in Tom Boogizm's Guest Charts for Boomkat and broadcast on Afrodeutsche's *The Peoples Party* on BBC Radio 6 Music, NTS Radio, and BBC Radio 3's New Music Show.

She holds a Bachelor of Music from the Royal College of Music, where she studied with Mark-Anthony Turnage, and was a winner of BBC Young Composer of the Year in 2019. The Arts Foundation has a long history of supporting music, and Mary Jane Edwards, Director of The Arts Foundation, says:

“The four shortlisted music artists represent the exceptional calibre and ambition of contemporary classical composition in the UK. In a field where composers are too often hidden from public recognition, each artist brings a distinctive voice and a bold commitment to shaping the future of music. We are delighted to support their respective career trajectories.”

Iain Watson, Chief Executive Officer of David Collins Studio and Trustee of The David Collins Foundation, says:

“The David Collins Foundation is thrilled to support the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 for Music. The shortlisted artists exemplify exceptional talent, innovation, and a profound commitment to musical creation. David Collins was an avid supporter of artists and creative practitioners across diverse disciplines. We are proud to uphold his legacy by investing in the next generation of rising composers in this way.”

The winning Fellow, receiving £20,000, will be revealed at an Award Ceremony on 2 February 2026, with all Shortlisted Artists awarded £1,000 towards their artistic practice.

You can explore the Shortlisted Artists' work on the [Arts Foundation website](#) and watch the award announcements via [Instagram Live](#) on 2 February 2026.

The Music Award is supported in partnership with The David Collins Foundation.

Press Pack & Images

The Music Shortlist Press Pack and Images can be viewed [here](#).

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 Press Pack can be viewed [here](#).

Media Enquiries

press@artsfoundation.co.uk

Notes to Editors

About The Arts Foundation

The Arts Foundation is a registered charity that supports individual artists and creatives in the UK with unconditional financial fellowships through the Arts Foundation Futures Awards.

Since 1993, the Arts Foundation has awarded over £2 million to the most promising artists in the UK at a pivotal moment in their careers to enable them to concentrate on their creative development, experiment, and realise their artistic potential.

The annual Arts Foundation Futures Awards provide five transformative £20,000 Fellowships, with all Shortlisted Artists receiving £1,000 towards the development of their practice.

The vital contribution of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards to the arts in the UK is demonstrated by its past Fellows, many of whom are regarded as contemporary pioneers and have gone on to become leaders in their respective art forms, including: Wayne McGregor (1994), Alice Oswald (1996), Sarah Kane (1998), Asif Kapadia (2001), Ali Smith (2001), Rufus Norris (2002), Carol Morley (2003), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2006), and more recently, Simon Fujiwara (2009), Sam Lee (2011), Alice Birch (2014), Hollie McNish (2015), Evan Ifekoya (2017), Holly Hendry (2019), Onyeka Igwe (2020), Klein (2020), and Bethany Williams (2020).

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2026 are generously supported in partnership with The David Collins Foundation, The Adrian Brinkerhoff Poetry Fund of the Sidney E. Frank Foundation, and The Yoma Sasburg Estate.

www.artsfoundation.co.uk

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About The David Collins Foundation

The David Collins Foundation was set up in memory of the late designer David Collins to honour his legacy and celebrate his love of the Arts. Since its creation in 2016, the Foundation has partnered with the Arts Foundation to support artists across multiple disciplines, including furniture design, poetry and animation.

www.davidcollins.studio/foundation



