

Wednesday 11 February 2026
7.30pm
Milton Court Concert Hall

GUILDHALL
SCHOOL

Guildhall Big Band: Vocal Pioneers

directed by Matt Skelton

featuring Zara McFarlane

narrated by Kevin Le Gendre

Milton Court Concert Hall

Please make sure that digital devices & mobile phones are silenced during the performance.

Eating is not permitted in the auditorium. Drinks are allowed inside the auditorium in polycarbonates.

Filming or recording of the performance is not permitted.

Latecomers will be able to enter the auditorium at a suitable break in the performance.

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Founded in 1880 by the City of London Corporation.

Chair of the Board of Governors

The Hon. Emily Benn

Principal

Professor Jonathan Vaughan FGS

Vice-Principal & Director of Music

Armin Zanner FGS



Guildhall School is provided by the City of London Corporation as part of its contribution to the cultural life of London and the nation.

Guildhall Big Band

Voice

Zara McFarlane
Rosa Witts
Molly Davies
Cass Begg
Tiger-Lily Jonathan
ajay b. bop
Alastair Eddie

Saxophone

Jack Murray (alto)
Rosalina Carrillo Lerena (alto)
Emma Foulds (tenor)
George Farrar (tenor)
Max Lo (baritone)

Trumpet/Flugel Horn

Sandy Watkin
Benny Tayler
Amelia Stuart
Konrad Moestrup

Trombone

Alexander Ehret
Andy Leeming
Helena Kieser
Jamie Cadden (bass)

Guitar

Alex Bishop
Joe Duncan

Piano

Thomas Sladden

Bass

Johnathan Vel
Joseph Smith

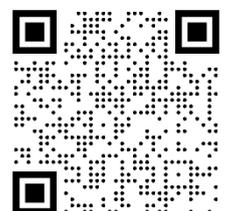
Drums

Frank Hawkes
Natan Kedzierski

Digital Programme

To access our digital programme, scan the QR code or visit:

[www.guildhall-programmes.co.uk/
2026-02-11-big-band](http://www.guildhall-programmes.co.uk/2026-02-11-big-band)



Programme

Harry Akst

Dinah

lyrics by Sam M Lewis and Joe Young
as performed by Louis Armstrong
featuring Alastair Eddie

Johnny Green

I Cover the Waterfront

lyrics by Edward Heyman
as performed by Louis Armstrong
featuring a Jay B. Bop

Duke Ellington

It Don't Mean a Thing

lyrics by Bubber Miley
as performed by Ivie Anderson
featuring Rosa Witts

Duke Ellington

I Got It Bad

lyrics by Paul Francis Webster
as performed by Ivie Anderson
featuring Cass Begg

Duke Ellington

Don't Get Around Much Anymore

arranged by and featuring a Jay B. Bop

Ted Grouya

Flamingo

lyrics by Edmund Anderson
as performed by Herb Jeffries
featuring Alastair Eddie

Duke Ellington

Come Sunday

as performed by Mahalia Jackson
featuring Zara McFarlane

INTERVAL (20 minutes)**Edgar Sampson**

Don't Be That Way

Chick Webb

I'll Chase the Blues Away

as performed by Ella Fitzgerald
featuring Tiger-Lily Jonathan

Vernon Duke

I Can't Get Started

lyrics by Ira Gershwin
as performed by Billie Holiday
featuring Rosa Witts

Count Basie

Swing! Brother, Swing!

as performed by Billie Holiday
featuring Molly Davies

Billy Eckstine

Exactly Like You

as performed by Sarah Vaughan
featuring Zara McFarlane and Cass Begg

Mary Lou Williams

In the Land of OO-Bla-Dee

lyrics by Milt Orent
as performed by Kenny Hagood
featuring a Jay B. Bop and Alastair Eddie

Gigi Gryce

You're Drivin' Me Crazy

as performed by Betty Carter
featuring Zara McFarlane

Gigi Gryce

But Beautiful

as performed by Betty Carter
featuring Zara McFarlane

Gigi Gryce

Blue Bird of Happiness

as performed by Betty Carter
featuring Tiger-Lily Jonathan

Biographies

Matt Skelton

Matt Skelton is a drummer equally at home in modern and vintage Jazz styles enjoying a diverse musical career that has already spanned three decades. He has accompanied many leading Jazz luminaries such as Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Conte Candoli, Bucky Pizzarelli, John Pizzarelli, Warren Vache, Scott Hamilton, John Hendricks, Kurt Elling, Curtis Stigers, Gregory Porter and most recently Georgie Fame. He has recorded and appeared with singers such as Marion Montgomery, Dame Cleo Laine, Claire Martin and Jessye Norman. In 2015 he toured in the USA and recorded with Seth Macfarlane. He was Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's drummer of choice and for eight years toured and recorded as a member of Stacey Kent's group, including her Grammy-nominated 2007 release *Breakfast on the Morning Tram* on BlueNote.

Matt Skelton is a founding member of the Grammy nominated John Wilson Orchestra. He regularly appears with the BBC Big Band and often with the BBC Concert, BBC Philharmonic and BBC Symphony orchestras including the *Last Night of the Proms* 2017. Traveling as John Wilson's drummer he has most recently performed with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Stockholm Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2018 Matt toured internationally with Sir Simon Rattle with the London Symphony Orchestra for various Leonard Bernstein centenary concerts, including performances of Bernstein's second Symphony, *The Age of Anxiety* and a concert version of *Wonderful Town*.

West End musical theatre credits include the 2015 Savoy revival of *Gypsy* and the Broadway transfer of *An American in Paris* at the Dominion theatre 2017. Recent film soundtracks include *Motherless Brooklyn*, *Catch 22*, *Four Kids and It* and *Blythe Spirit*.

At Guildhall School, Matt teaches for both the Jazz and Wind, Brass & Percussion departments.

Zara McFarlane

Zara McFarlane stands at the forefront of the UK's British jazz scene, recognised as one of the most dynamic and genre-defying vocalists of her generation. A multi-award-winning singer, songwriter, composer and performer, she has cultivated a career that seamlessly bridges jazz, reggae, folk, nu-soul and electronic music earning her critical acclaim and international recognition.

Renowned for her eloquence and artistic depth, Zara consistently pushes creative boundaries, exploring new sonic landscapes while honouring the rich traditions that shape her artistry. Her latest album, *Sweet Whispers: Celebrating Sarah Vaughan*, is an analogue-recorded homage to the jazz legend, recorded at Durham Studios in London and produced by Giacomo Smith. Featuring a stellar ensemble of UK musicians, the project has been met with widespread critical praise:

Zara's journey began when her self-produced EP caught the attention of world-renowned DJ Gilles Peterson, leading to a string of celebrated albums on his label, Brownswood Recordings. From the introspective lyricism of *If You Knew Her* to the boundary-pushing rhythms of *Songs of an Unknown Tongue*, Zara continuously reinvents her sound. Her work draws from deep research into her Jamaican heritage, exploring the intersection of ancestral folk rhythms and modern electronic influences.

Her powerful impact is reflected in her numerous accolades, including multiple Jazz FM Vocalist of the Year awards, Best Jazz Act at the MOBO Awards and Session of the Year at the Worldwide Awards. Zara has graced stages across the globe, from the prestigious jazz venues of Ronnie Scott's and The Jazz Café to mainstream festivals such as British Summer Time in Hyde Park, North Sea Jazz Festival and SXSW in Austin, Texas to name a few.

Zara's ability to transcend genres has made her a sought-after collaborator for some of the biggest names in jazz, house, afrobeat, and contemporary music. She has worked with legends such as Louie Vega, Hugh Masekela, Ivan Lins, Nicola Conte, Antibalas, Ezra Collective, Shabaka Hutchings, while

her tracks have been remixed by the likes of Floating Points and Osunlade. Whether lending her voice to cutting-edge producers or classical orchestras such as Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, her versatility and creative vision sets her apart.

An artist with unyielding tenacity and curiosity, Zara extends her talents beyond the jazz stage. She has performed multiple times on the BBC's *Later with Jools Holland*. She has made an indelible mark in theatre, featuring as a vocalist in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Antony and Cleopatra* (with music by Laura Mvula) and Glyndebourne's opera *Agreed*. In 2021, she was commissioned to compose and perform an original vocal score for *DisInteGrated*, an avant-garde dance film by Jacob Jonas The Company, choreographed by Wade Robson and Tony Testa.

Passionate about fostering the next generation of musicians, Zara shares her expertise as a mentor and educator, leading masterclasses at institutions such as Guildhall School, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and BIMM. Her knowledge and insight have also led to her role as a judge for the BBC Young Jazz Musician Awards.

Zara McFarlane is an artist who refuses to be confined by genre or expectation. With an unwavering commitment to innovation, she continues to shape the future of contemporary jazz and beyond. Her voice, both literal and artistic, commands the attention of audiences worldwide, ensuring that every project she undertakes is a testament to her skill, intellect, and passion.

Kevin Le Gendre

Kevin Le Gendre is an award-winning journalist, writer and broadcaster with a special interest in black music, literature and culture.

Over the past three decades Kevin has written about soul, funk, jazz and hip-hop, as well as African and Caribbean authors for many publications, including *Echoes* magazine (formerly *Black Echoes*), *Jazzwise*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, Qwest tv in France and *Times Literary Supplement Online*.

Kevin has contributed to BBC Radio 4's *Front Row* and also presents documentaries. He is the author of *Don't Stop The Carnival*; *Black Music In Britain Vol.1* (2018) and his latest book is *Hear My Train A Comin': The Songs Of Jimi Hendrix*.

Kevin is currently a presenter on OneJazz.net, the global jazz radio station.

Forthcoming events

Guildhall Jazz Orchestra with Julian Siegel

13 February 2026
Milton Court Concert Hall

The Guildhall Jazz Orchestra welcomes saxophonist and composer Julian Siegel for an exhilarating evening featuring music from his celebrated album *Tales from the Jacquard* (Whirlwind Recordings).

Guildhall Jazz Orchestra: Modern Masters

19 March 2026
Milton Court Concert Hall

Guildhall Jazz Orchestra continues its Modern Masters series with a concert dedicated to the inventive spirit of Bob Brookmeyer – legendary trombonist, composer and educator.

Guildhall Studio Ensemble with Snowpoet

27 March 2026
Milton Court Concert Hall

Guildhall Studio Ensemble collaborates with Lauren Kinsella and Chris Hyson – the creative duo behind the acclaimed project Snowpoet – for an evening of expansive, reimaged works for large ensemble.