North East
Early Music Forum
Registered Charity No: 326282



Saturday 19th September 2026

Feast of Fools

A workshop for singers and all instrumentalists

Led by Dr Leah Stuttard

Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church

Main St, Burley in Wharfedale, Ilkley LS29 7DT

10 for 10.30 - 16.30 , pitch A=440

Leah writes:
'We might think we know what the medieval Feast of fools (festum stultorum) was like, but are you sure it's not just because Victor Hugo wrote a fabulously entertaining and richly detailed description from his romantic nineteenth century perspective? Even more alluring is the Disneyfied 'Topsy Turvy' day! All just gorgeous fantasy. But what was a feast of fools really like? And specifically, what music is there to explore?

We will sing and play lots of special songs with really cracking catchy tunes, as well as some beautiful polyphony, all taken from the four musico-liturgical sources that still exist, manuscripts from the French cathedrals of Sens, Beauvais, Laon and Le Puy en Velay. I think my favourite is maybe the book from Le Puy en Velay which was used for centuries, getting constantly updated. As there is no edition of this source, the music we will play and sing will all be material that I have prepared specially for this workshop. It includes all kinds of polyphony, one of the important updates to the ancient repertoire. We might also reflect on our received ideas about the Feast of Fools and find out where they come from, uncovering some more of the history of this fascinating tradition.'

Leah Stuttard comes from an industrial town in a particularly wet part of the North West of England. She fell in love with medieval music through listening to scratchy LPs of David Munrow that she bought from the library for £1. The medieval harp has been her companion for 30 years and she's been a singer all her life. After studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland, she went on to work with many major names around the world, including Jordi Savall, Micrologus and Ensemble Unicorn. Closer to home, she's had the privilege to work on some fantastic projects with Vivien Ellis (Sinfonye, Dufay Collective) and John Potter (Hilliard Ensemble). An enthusiastic pilgrim, she likes to think of herself as Margery Kempe without the weeping.

COST £18; concessions £9 (people aged ≤26 or on a very low income e.g. solely dependent on state benefits). STUDENTS FREE. Refreshments at breaks included. Bring a packed lunch or use local facilities. Please complete the booking form below and send with a cheque made payable to "NEEMF" to: **Joanna Rowling, 21A Manor Crescent, Pool-in-Wharfedale, Otley, LS21 1ND** (or book online via the workshop diary on our website www.neemf.org.uk). Closing date: 5th September 2026). If you cannot use your booked place, please inform us asap. For more information, please email joannarowling@btinternet.com

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Feast of Fools, 19 September 2026 (Closing date for applications: 5th Sept 2026) **Application Form**
Completed form and cheque to: **Joanna Rowling, 21A Manor Crescent, Pool-in-Wharfedale, Otley, LS21 1ND**

Name and address (with postcode please)...

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.... Postcode ....

Email ____ Tel: _________________________________

I wish to play:________________________ (*indicate instrument(s*) approx level *(eg starter, pro, student)* _________

or I wish to sing: ________________________ *(voice)* I would be able to sing solo (if required) □

Please also tell us if you have any special requirements (eg large print, transpositions or clefs preferred, etc):

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I enclose a cheque (*please make payable to `NEEMF'*) for £ _______ Do you belong to NEEMF? Yes / No

Is this your first workshop? If so, we will try to arrange a welcomer to meet you. Yes / No

For non-members of NEEMF: May we email you occasionally? Your email address will not be shared with anyone. Yes / No

Signed __________________________________ Date __________________

Burley In Wharfedale lies off the A65 (Kendal – Skipton - Leeds road) between Ilkley and Otley. Main Street was the original A65, and is now accessed by a roundabout at either end of the town. The Methodist Church is on the left as you travel westwards, opposite the Co-op. There is a small car park at the back, on Back Lane, but also plenty of on-street parking. The railway station, which is on the Leeds/Bradford to Ilkley line, is 15 minutes' walk away to the SW.
Venue website: https://www.burleyinwharfedalemethodistchurch.org.uk/



Please note: The NEEMF half-price pensioner concession is only for pensioners whose SOLE source of income is the state pension. Pensioners who live on a combination of occupational and state pensions pay the full workshop rate.