



Lofoten Festival

Chamber music above the Arctic Circle

6–13 July 2025 (ML 735)

8 days • £5,560

Lecturer: Dr Michael Downes

Fifteen concerts with international artists including Marc-André Hamelin, Anna Fedorova, Joachim Carr, Engegård Quartet and Dénes Varjon.

Against a backdrop of mountains, lakes and fjords on a string of islands off northern Norway.

Above the Arctic Circle, with midnight sun.

Optional cruise, introduction to the history of the area, visits to local galleries.

The Lofoten archipelago juts into the sea off northern Norway, beyond the Arctic Circle. This string of islands is of extraordinary natural beauty, with craggy mountains, sheltered inlets, unspoilt wilderness and, in high summer, the midnight sun. Svolvær is one of two towns in the district; its population is less than 5,000. The Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival must be one of the most remote such events on the planet, and one of the most beautifully located.

To the attractions of landscape and location are added a quite exceptional collection of performers. There are not many – most pop up in several concerts – so the 2025 artists can all be listed here: Marc-André Hamelin, Trio Con Brio Copenhagen, Joachim Carr, Jan Clemens, Carlsen Jens Elvekjær, Soo-Jin Hong, Juliet Jopling, Soo-Kyong, Anna Fedorova, Engegård Quartet, Berit Opheim, Knut Anders Buen Garnås, Laura Custodio Sabas, Bryony Gibson-Cornish, Sinéad O'Halloran and the Marmen String Quartet.

Concert venues range from intimate churches (some with their own Steinway Grands), to Lofoten 'Cathedral,' the largest wooden building north of Trondheim. This is an intensive experience, with two or three concerts of between an hour and an hour and a half over six days. On more than one occasion, late night concerts take wondrous advantage of the midnight sun.

Some concerts take place in the hotel, and some are elsewhere in Svolvær a few minutes away on foot. Others are on other islands and involve drives of up to 75 minutes, the islands being linked by bridges – opportunity to experience more of the wonderful landscapes. The tour includes an optional cruise to the



Hauklandssanden in the Lofoten Islands, ©Baard Loeken and courtesy of the Lofoten Islands Festival.

trollfjord, giving the opportunity to be immersed in the Norwegian landscape.

Itinerary

Day 1: Oslo. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Gatwick to Oslo (Norwegian). A guided walking tour of Oslo by Frank Høifødt in the afternoon, followed by a lecture, and dinner in the hotel restaurant. Overnight in Oslo.

Day 2: Svolvær. Fly at c. 1.00pm from Oslo to Svolvær (Widerøe). The remaining 6 nights are spent in the pretty little coastal town of Svolvær. Arrive at the hotel in time for dinner before an evening concert in the Lofoten Kulturhus: programme to be announced.

Day 3: Svolvær, Leknes, Stamsund, Borg, Kabelvåg. Morning concert in the hotel: Marc-André Hamelin (piano): Beethoven Piano Sonata No.29. Travel to nearby Kabelvåg for an independent lunch and visits to the Lofoten Museum and the Espolin Gallery. Onto Leknes for dinner at the Lofoten Seafood Centre, before a concert in Stamsund Church: Joachim Carr (piano): Beethoven, Piano Sonata No.32; Trio Con Brio Copenhagen: Rebecca Clarke, Piano Trio; Anna Fedorova (piano): Chopin, Ballad No.1, Op.23. Continue by coach for a late evening concert in Borge Church: Marmen

String Quartet: Mozart, String Quartet No.19, K.465; Dénes Varjon (piano): Beethoven, Piano Sonata No.30, Op.109; Bartók, Dance Suite. Return to the hotel c. 11.30pm.

Day 4: Svolvær, Vågan. Morning concert in the hotel: Jan Clemens Carlsen (cello) and Joachim Carr (piano): Grieg, Cello Sonata in A Minor, Op.36. An optional cruise to Trollfjord from Svolvær. Evening concert in Lofoten Cathedral, Vågan: Joachim Carr (piano): Bach, French Suite No.5, BWV 816; Marmen Quartet: Hannah Kendall, 'How ruin nested inside each thimble'd throat/ & made it sing'; Jens Elvekjær (piano), Soo-Jin Hong (violin), Juliet Jopling (viola), and Soo-Kyong (cello): Suk, Piano Quartet in A Minor Op.1; Anna Fedorova (piano): Chopin Ballad No.4, Op.52. Return to Svolvær for a late evening concert in Svolvær Church: Engegård Quartet: Brahms, String Quartet No.2, Op.51, Marc-André Hamelin (piano): Rachmaninov, Piano Sonata No.2, Op.36.

Day 5: Svolvær, Borge, Gravdal, Leknes. Morning concert in the hotel: Trio Con Brio Copenhagen: Schubert, Piano Trio No.1, D898. Following the concert, a walking tour of nearby Svinøya, a small Island located next to Svolvær. Evening concert in Buksnes Church, Gravdal: Dénes Varjon (piano): Chopin, Fantasy in F Minor; Marmen Quartet: Ravel, String Quartet

Lofoten Festival
continued

in F. Late evening concert in the Meieriet Kultursenter in Leknes: Anna Fedorova (piano): Chopin, Ballad No.2, Op.38; Marc-André Hamelin (piano), Engegård Quartet: Marc-André Hamelin, Piano Quintet. Return to the hotel by c. 12.30am.

Day 6: Svolvær, Vågan. Free morning in Svolvær before a *lunchtime concert in Svolvær Church: Berit Opheim (voice), Knut Anders Buen Garnås (Hardanger Fiddle), Joachim Carr (piano): Grieg, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op.72; Arvid Engegård (violin), Carnaval; Arvid Engegård (violin) Dénes Varjon (piano), Bartók Rhapsody No.1, BB94a. Evening concert in Lofoten Cathedral, Vågan: Engegård Quartet: Anderson, Ice Quartet; Soo-Jin Hong (violin), Laura Custodio Sabas (violin), Bryony Gibson-Cornish (viola), Juliet Jopling (viola), Soo-Kyong Hong (cello), Sinéad O'Halloran (cello): Tchaikovsky, Souvenir de Florence, Op.70.* Return to Svolvær for a *late evening concert in Lofoten Kulturhus: Dénes Varjon (piano) Engegård Quartet: Elgar, Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op.84; Joachim Carr (piano) Marc-André Hamelin (piano): John Adams, Hallelujah Junction.*

Day 7: Svolvær, Buksnes. Free morning in Svolvær before a *lunchtime concert in Svolvær Church: Anna Fedorova (piano), Laura Custodio Sabas (violin), Sinéad O'Halloran (cello): Bartók Rhapsody for Violin and Piano No.2, BB 96a. Evening concert in Buksnes Church, Gravdal: a programme by musicians from throughout the festival.* Return to the hotel by c. 10.00pm.

Day 8: Svolvær to London. Fly from Svolvær to London Gatwick via Oslo, landing at c. 7.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Michael Downes. Director of Music at the University of St Andrews, musical director of St Andrews Chorus and founding artistic director of Byre Opera. He writes programme notes for Wigmore Hall and Aldeburgh Music and reviews music for the *Times Literary Supplement*. He is author of a highly praised study of British composer Jonathan Harvey.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £5,560 or £5,450 without international flights on days 1 and 8. **Single occupancy:** £6,460 or £6,350 without international flights on days 1 and 8.

Included: international flights with Norwegian (economy class, Boeing 737) between London and Oslo; domestic flights with Widerøe (economy class, DHC-8 100) between Oslo and Svolvær; transport by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, six dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Internal flights: domestic flights costing c. £690 with Widerøe (economy class, DHC-8 100) from Oslo to Svolvær on day 1, and from Svolvær to Oslo on day 8 are included in the tour price for all participants.

Accommodation. Grand Hotel, Oslo ([grand.no](#)): 5-star hotel in the heart of the city; a short walk from the National Gallery. **Thon Hotel, Svolvær ([thonhotels.com](#)):** a comfortable 4-star hotel on the waterfront with fjord, harbour, or mountain views. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? While the days are reasonably relaxed, there are several late nights where the group does not return to the hotel until between 11.30pm and 12.30am after late-evening concerts. The late evening concerts on days 4 and 6 can be optional as they are within walking distance of the hotel. In Lofoten the sun does not set in July so daylight is constant. We advise you to bring an eye mask. A good level of fitness is required when taking part in the guided tour of Svinøya and likewise when participating in other visits.

Average distance by coach per day: 65km.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Stockholm Modern*, 24–29 June 2025; *Savonlinna Opera I*, 14–18 July 2025; *Music Along the Seine*, 16–23 July 2025.