



Lofoten Festival

Chamber music above the Arctic Circle

7–14 July 2024 (MK 354)

8 days • £5,040

Lecturer: Dr Michael Downes

Fifteen concerts with international artists including Leif Ove Andsnes, Paul Lewis, Mark Padmore, Imogen Cooper and Martin Fröst.

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

Above the Arctic Circle, with midnight sun.

Optional walk, Viking museum, meetings with people involved in the festival.

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 2024 artists can all be listed here: Leif Ove Andsnes, Arvid Engegård, Imogen Cooper, Liza Ferschtman, Martin Fröst, Fuko Ishi, Juliet Jopling, Paul Lewis, Mark Padmore, Roman Rabinovich, Marko Ylönen and the Engegård String Quartet, formed in Lofoten itself.

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 countryside walk led by a local guide, and opportunity to see archaeological finds from the Iron Age and the era of the Vikings.



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

Itinerary

Day 1: Svolvær. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Gatwick to Svolvær via Oslo (airlines: Norwegian and Widerøe). Arrive at the hotel in time for dinner. All seven nights are spent at a hotel in the pretty little coastal town of Svolvær.

Day 2: Svolvær. Following the first of the daily lectures, there is an easy walk which mostly follows a flat boardwalk around a lake near Svolvær: c. 5 km, c. 1½ hours. *Evening concert at Lofoten Kulturhus: Arvid Engegård (violin), Leif Ove Andsnes (piano), Martin Fröst (clarinet): Schumann, Fantasistücke Op.12. The rest of the programme to be announced.*

Day 3: Svolvær, Leknes, Stamsund, Borg. *Morning concert in the hotel: Paul Lewis (piano): Schubert Piano Sonata.* In the afternoon drive to Leknes for an early dinner before a concert in *Stamsund Church: Engegård String Quartet, Beethoven String Quartet Op.74; Paul Lewis (piano), Leif Ove Andsnes (piano): Schubert, Fantasy in F Minor; Mark Padmore (tenor), Imogen Cooper (piano), Schumann, Lieder Op.40.* Continue by coach for a late evening concert in *Borge Church: Liza Ferschtman (violin): Bach, Chaconne; Leif Ove Andsnes (piano), Juliet Jopling (viola), Martin Fröst (clarinet): Kurtág, Hommage à Schumann;*

Marko Ylönen (cello), Roman Rabinovich (piano): Poulenc, Cello Sonata. Return to the hotel c. 12.30am.

Day 4: Svolvær, Vågan. *Morning concert in the hotel: Fuko Ishi (piano): Grieg, Lyric Pieces; Ballade. Evening concert in Lofoten Cathedral, Vågan: Leif Ove Andsnes (piano): Brahms, Piano Pieces Op.116; Mark Padmore (tenor), Fuko Ishi (piano): Wolf, Lieder; Roman Rabinovich (piano), Engegård Quartet: Dohnanyi, Piano Quintet No.2.* Return to Svolvær for a late evening concert in *Svolvær Church: Paul Lewis (piano): Schubert, Piano Sonata No.19 in C Minor; Liza Ferschtman (violin), Leif Ove Andsnes (piano): Bartók, Violin Sonata No.1.*

Day 5: Svolvær, Borge, Gravdal, Leknes. *Morning concert in the hotel: Paul Lewis (piano): Schubert Piano Sonata.* In the afternoon visit a reconstructed Viking village located in Borg, near today's concert venue. *Evening concert in Buksnes Church, Gravdal: Imogen Cooper (piano): Beethoven, Piano Sonata Op.110; Roman Rabinovich (piano), Liza Ferschtman (violin), Marko Ylönen (cello): programme to be announced. Late evening concert in the Meieriet Kultursenterin Leknes: Engegård Quartet: Mendelssohn, String Quartet No.6, Op.80; Martin Fröst (clarinet) Roman*

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Rabinovic (piano): Poulenc, Clarinet Sonata.
Return to the hotel by c. 12.30am.

Day 6: Svolvær, Vågan. Free morning in Svolvær before a *lunchtime concert in Svolvær Church: Fuko Ishi (piano): Schumann, Carnaval; Arvid Engegård (violin), Marko Ylönen (cello): Kodal, Duo for violin and cello.* Evening concert in Lofoten Cathedral, Vågan: *Paul Lewis (piano): Schubert, Piano Sonata No.21 in B Minor; Martin Fröst (clarinet), Engegård Quartet: Brahms, Clarinet Quintet.* Return to Svolvær for a *late evening concert in Lofoten Kulturhus: Imogen Cooper (piano), Liza Ferschtman (violin), Marko Ylönen (cello): Haydn, Piano Trio in F sharp Minor; Mark Padmore (tenor), Imogen Cooper (piano): Schumann, Dichterliebe.*

Day 7: Svolvær, Buksnes. Free morning in Svolvær before a *lunchtime concert in Svolvær Church: Roman Rabinovich (piano): Bach, Goldberg Variations.* 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: £5,040 or £4,850 without international flights on days 1 and 8. **Single occupancy:** £5,860 or £5,670 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, five dinners and one lunch 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. £650 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. 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 two nights where the group does not return to the hotel until c. 12.30am after late-evening concerts, and two nights with a return of c. 11.15pm. The latter 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.

Average distance by coach per day: 65km.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *West Cork Chamber Music Festival*, 30 June–4 July 2024; *Finland: Aalto & Others*, 27 June–5 July 2024.