

Black Pencil Prize 2026 'Music for Ally'

This international open call invites composers of all ages and nationalities to create a new work for Black Pencil, inspired by Almere. The 2026 edition of this prize is held in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Almere, the youngest city in the Netherlands, also known as 'Ally'.

Composers are invited to draw inspiration from one of four sub themes:

Ally Nature
Ally Architecture
Ally Stories
Ally Next

Now open
for submissions!



Ally? Who's Ally?

Ally is more than a name. Born as street slang for Almere, it has grown into a symbol of the beating heart of a young city. A name that lives, on walls, in art, in stories, and in the voices of its residents. From the iconic Ally staircase in the city center to initiatives in every neighborhood: Ally is everywhere. It is a symbol of pride and identity. Of a city that is young, creative, connected, and constantly in motion.

blackpencil.org

Be inspired by Almere

Just fifty years ago, the first generation of residents set foot on this new land in Flevoland. Those were pioneers, often from Amsterdam, who started something entirely new together. Today, Almere has grown into a vibrant city of over 230,000 inhabitants, where the third and fourth generations are now growing up. A city of contrasts and convergence: over 160 nationalities, each with their own story, together shaping a shared future. Almere is the largest city in Flevoland, and the youngest and fastest-growing city in the Netherlands. Ambitious to grow further, not just in size, but in quality. A city that is healthy, livable, and connected.

Ally Nature

Almere is a city on newly reclaimed land from the sea. It is one of the greenest cities in the Netherlands, surrounded by polders, delta landscapes, forests, waters, beaches, and expansive parks, including the unique Nationaal Park Nieuw Land. Each district and neighborhood offer a calm and pleasant living environment where nature is always close.

The cycling paths, walking routes and recreational spaces form a living landscape. Almere continues to invest in greenery, not only to enhance daily life, but also to strengthen health and prepare for climate change. Nature is a driving force, a system of balance, growth, and renewal.

So, listen closely. Can you hear the wind over the polders, the rhythm and pulse of water and reeds? Let the landscape set your tempo, let the greenery shape your harmonies, and transform Almere's nature into sound.

Read more:

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en/discover/nature>

<https://almere20.nl/project/excellente-groene-en-gezonde-leefomgeving/>

<https://www.nationaalparknieuwland.nl/en>

Ally Architecture

Almere is a designed city, only founded in 1975, built from vision and imagination. Its neighborhoods each have their own identity, shaped by contemporary architecture and a spirit of experimentation. The city districts are connected by an extensive network of bus lanes and bicycle paths. Architects from around the world have contributed to a cityscape that is diverse, bold, and constantly evolving.

A city with a striking skyline, expressive buildings, and street art collectives such as Kamp Seedorf to add another layer of voice and color.

Think of the city as an instrument: façades resonate, street art echo, squares breathe, and neighborhoods form harmonies, inviting you to translate architecture into sound.

Read more:

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en/art>

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en/discover/architecture/architecture>

<https://www.visitalmere.com/nl/routes/1428533926/street-art-wandelroute-almere-centrum>

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en/city-guide/urban>

<https://www.uitinalmere.nl/inspiratie/almeerse-kamp-seedorf-goes-worldwide>

Ally Stories

Founded in 1975, Almere is the youngest city of the Netherlands. A city with a short but powerful history. In just a few decades, it has grown into a vibrant urban environment only 30 minutes from Amsterdam. Everything here was built from scratch, shaped by the people who made it their home.

Today, more than 230,000 inhabitants. 160 Nationalities live together in the districts Almere Haven, Almere Stad, Almere Buiten, Almere Hout and Almere Poort. Their rhythms, voices, and experiences create a layered cultural landscape. Fifty years of Almere history to tell.

We want Almere to recognize itself in music and its residents to experience their city with new ears. Which stories, fragments, memories will you capture in sound?

Read more:

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en/city-guide/history>

<https://stadsarchief.almere.nl/>

Ally Next

What's next? Almere looks forward. As the largest city in Flevoland and one of the fastest-growing cities in the Netherlands, it continues to evolve with ambition and imagination. The coming decades raise questions of scale, identity, and possibility: what will Almere sound like in another fifty years?

The ambition? To be among the top 5 largest municipalities in the Netherlands in the future. Growth here is not only about size, but about quality; urban, social, cultural, educational, for businesses and ecological. The city aims to remain healthy, livable, connected, and innovative. Almere is a place of potential, where ideas can take shape and futures can be explored.

Everything is possible.
Almere is a city of
dreams. Let this
openness inspire you to
imagine, compose, and
give form to what will
come next.

Read more:

<https://almere20.nl/archief/nieuws/almere-2050/hoe-ziet-almere-eruit-in-2050/>

<https://www.hetkaninalmere.nl/>

More inspiration:

<https://www.visitalmere.com/en>

<https://english.almere.nl/the-municipality/about-almere>