Jan-Willem Schaafsma studied at the Royal Conservatoire and earned his master's degree at the Dutch National Opera Academy.
After completing his master's, he performed roles such as Lysander in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Britten), Belmonte in Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Mozart), and Lenski in Evgeni Onegin (Tchaikovsky). He has sung solos with the NPS Zaterdag Matinee (Dutch Radio Orchestra), Dutch National Opera, Opera Zuid, and the Dutch Touring Opera, where he performed the title role in Bernstein’s Candide. He also appeared in productions by Baroque Opera Amsterdam and Opera2Day.

In 2021, he performed with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century in Die Zauberflöte/Der Schauspieldirektor and with the Dutch National Opera in A Song for the Moon, an opera set to return in the 2024/2025 season.

His concert repertoire spans from Monteverdi to Berio, and he has collaborated with leading orchestras in the Netherlands.

Jan-Willem has performed with orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, North Netherlands Orchestra, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonie Zuidnederland, and the Netherlands Bach Society. He has worked under many renowned conductors, including Ed Spanjaard, Edo de Waart, Ivor Bolton, Cristian Măcelaru, Reinbert de Leeuw, Shunske Sato, and Kenneth Montgomery.