

SATURDAY 17 DECEMBER 7.30PM  
THE KING'S SCHOOL, MACCLESFIELD

NORTHERN  
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

# NORTHERN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

## DIRECTED BY MAGNUS JOHNSTON

### WITH GUY JOHNSTON CELLO



A British violinist, **Magnus Johnston** was a Chorister in the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and a Scholar at Chetham's School of Music and the RNCM. He has been Guest Leader and Principal with orchestras including the Philharmonia, Britten Sinfonia, Amsterdam Sinfonietta and the Scottish and Australian chamber orchestras. He is a former BBC New Generation Artist and the recipient of two Borletti-Buitoni awards.

Since 2004 he has been a member of the Aronowitz Ensemble (string sextet and piano), touring widely, and recording and broadcasting for BBC Radio 3. He joined the Navarra Quartet in 2010 and has since performed with the Quartet at venues and festivals including the Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Lincoln Center, New York, Berlin Konzerthaus, Sydney Opera House and at the BBC Proms and Aix-en-Provence festivals. Previously for The Royal Opera: *The Magic Flute* and *Theodora*.

**Guy Johnston** is one of the most exciting British cellists of his generation. His early successes included winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year, the Shell London Symphony Orchestra Gerald MacDonald Award and a Classical Brit. He has performed with many leading international orchestras including the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, Britten Sinfonia, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Moscow Philharmonic and St Petersburg Symphony under conductors such as Illan Volkov, Sakari Oramo, Vassily Sinaisky, Yuri Simonov, Alexander Dmitriev, Sir Roger Norrington, Robin Ticciati, Yan Pascal Tortelier, Sir Andrew Davis, Leonard Slatkin, Daniele Gatti.

Guy continues to play chamber music and recitals at prestigious venues and festivals across Europe including Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Louvre Museum, the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moritzburg Festival, Three Choirs Festival and MusicFest Aberystwyth, collaborating with instrumentalists such as Melvyn Tan, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Janine Jansen, Lawrence Power, Anthony Marwood and Brett Dean. Guy was privileged to perform as part of the Wigmore Hall and BBC Radio 3 special series of concerts, livestreamed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A prolific recording artist, Guy's recent recordings include Howells' Cello Concerto with Britten Sinfonia (a piece he also gave the premiere of) and a celebration disc of the tricentenary of his David Tecchler cello, collaborating with the acclaimed Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, where the cello was made. The 2019 season saw the release of his recording Themes and Variations with Tom Poster, comprising works by Beethoven, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Rachmaninov, MacMillan, Fauré and Martinu.

Guy is Artistic Director of the Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival and a founder member of the award-winning Aronowitz Ensemble. He is Associate Professor of Cello at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York and a guest Professor of Cello at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was awarded an Hon. ARAM in 2015. He plays the 1692 Antonio Stradivari cello known as the "Segelman, ex Hart" kindly loaned to him through the Beare's International Violin Society by a generous patron.

The **Northern Chamber Orchestra** (NCO) has come a long way since it was set up in 1967. It now presents an annual series of eight concerts at The King's School in Macclesfield, which attracts top-flight soloists. The 2022-23 season features violinists Sophie Rosa and Jorge Jimenez, singers Caroline Taylor and Ralph Thomas Williams, and oboist John Roberts among many others.

The NCO players perform annually at Buxton Festival, playing for its main opera productions, and the NCO regularly gives orchestral concerts at St John's Church in Buxton. The orchestra also performs across the North of England and is regularly included in Orchestras Live programmes across rural areas, including the Lake District.

The members of the orchestra (twenty five in total) are distinguished chamber musicians who regularly appear as soloists.

The orchestra delivers an extensive learning and development programme with schools, colleges and music groups in many of the orchestra's concert locations. The orchestra's ethos is to provide young people and adults with opportunities to engage with enjoyable and inspiring projects, which are tailor-made to meet specific needs. The orchestra is always keen to give emerging new artists performance opportunities, including a fourteen-year-old Jennifer Pike back in 2003. Collaborations with Chetham's School of Music have enabled talented music students to rehearse with, then share the stage with, NCO's musicians as part of an ongoing learning and performance partnership.

It has over thirty, critically-acclaimed recordings to its name and is known in every continent. While excelling in performing a wide range of repertoire, the NCO enjoys opportunities to premiere new works by contemporary composers, such as Adam Gorb, Anthony Gilbert and David Ellis, and in house composer James Manson.

# NORTHERN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

## MAGNUS JOHNSTON VIOLIN & DIRECTOR

### GUY JOHNSTON CELLO

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872 - 1958)  
Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'

**Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732 - 1809)  
Cello Concerto No. 2 in D major Op. 101  
*I Allegro moderato II Adagio III Rondo. Allegro*

**Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich** (1906 - 1975)  
Chamber Symphony Op.73a  
*I Allegretto II Moderato con moto III Allegro non troppo IV Adagio, attacca V Moderato*

These variants on the old English folk song *Dives and Lazarus* are, in **Vaughan Williams's** own words, 'not exact replicas of traditional tunes but rather reminiscences of various versions in my own collection and those of others'. Premiered in Carnegie Hall as part of the 1939 New York World's Fair, this work is a wonderful example of the composer's trademark sumptuous textures and modal tonalities.

**Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732–1809) had a long musical career, beginning in childhood as a chorister and continuing well into his later years. A friend of Mozart and teacher of Beethoven, he was pivotal in the evolution of fundamental genres of classical music, such as the symphony and string quartet. Ever the innovator, in his works for soloist and orchestra Haydn explored writing for solo instruments other than the more usual piano or violin. His two extant cello concertos, together with his trumpet concerto, are today the best known of his concertos.

In his D major Cello Concerto, written in 1783, he creates a sound-world which displays the soloistic potential of the cello, liberated from its customary role of providing the bass line. Its cheerful, amiable character belies its virtuosic writing, particularly in the outer movements; these explore the cello's highest register and include brilliant scale passages and multiple notes played simultaneously. By contrast, the central, slow movement shows off the cello's ability to spin a cantabile line.

Born in St. Petersburg in 1906 into a family with Siberian and Polish roots, **Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich** lived through the enormous social and political changes of Soviet-era Russia. His seminal fifteen string quartets span nearly four decades, from 1938 until a year before his death in 1975.

Originally composed in 1946 as String Quartet No.3, this thrilling Chamber Symphony was re-worked by Shostakovich's close friend and collaborator, Rudolf Barshai. Barshai adds woodwinds and harp to a full string orchestra, to explore the wide range of textures, sonic effects and inventive part writing in this music of startling emotional and psychological impact. Shostakovich originally gave titles to each of the five movements, characterising the quartet as a reflection on war, but retracted them immediately after the premiere; he gave no explanation.

The first movement, titled "Calm unawareness of the future cataclysm", has an almost textbook sonata form, starting with a light, impish theme and leading to a pianissimo second subject. The music moves into a chaotic fugue, scrambling the themes and culminating with a wild acceleration before finishing with an ironic wink.

The second movement, "Rumblings of unrest and anticipation", moves the music into much darker waters. Against a viola ostinato, reiterated with militaristic implacability, the violins respond with an angular melody that refuses to fit in with the prevailing E minor tonality. This nervous, malevolent waltz shifts in and out of a duple meter march, suggesting that the "rumblings" are those of war.

With fortissimo dynamics, propulsive rhythms and weighty, stabbing chords, the third movement presents "The forces of war unleashed". We are held in the grip of an unflinching, impersonal war machine.

The fourth movement is a desolate, haunting lament, a "Homage to the dead". It begins with a stark, heavy intonation by unison strings, answered by a keening oboe theme. The opening theme recurs over an increasingly impassioned funeral march before sinking into a forlorn dirge for bassoon and lower strings.

The finale asks, "The eternal question: Why? and for what?". Episodic and ambiguous, it mixes duple and triple meters, unsettling marches and ghostly dances, as it attempts to rebuild a devastated world. The music builds into a fortissimo climax, with an outpouring of grief that recalls the fourth movement dirge, eventually paling into a long pedal-point above which a lonely violin rises 'into eternal light and conciliation'.

# TONIGHT'S ORCHESTRA

## Violin 1

Magnus Johnston  
Catherine Yates  
Paula Smart  
Jack Greed  
Sarah White  
Laura Embrey

## Violin 2

Simon Gilks  
Louise Latham  
Susan Voss  
Sarah Percy  
Oliver Morris

## Viola

Carol Ella  
Alistair Vennart  
Aimee Johnson  
Carolyn Tregaskis

## Cello

Jennifer Langridge  
Barbara Grunthal  
Amanda Turner  
Elliott Bailey

## Double bass

Diane Clark  
Thomas Betts

## Flute

Nichola Hunter

## Oboe

Kenny Sturgeon  
Jane Evans

## Clarinet

Lynsey Marsh

## Bassoon

Ben Hudson

## French Horn

Naomi Atherton  
Jenny Cox

## Harp

Eleanor Hudson

# UPCOMING CONCERTS

## Music and the Holocaust

Saturday 14 January 7.30pm  
St Michael's Church, Macclesfield  
**Sarah Brandwood-Spencer** director & violin

## Baroque meets Tango

Saturday 18 February 7.30pm  
The King's School in Macclesfield  
**Sophie Rosa** director & violin

## Stabat mater dolorosa

Saturday 11 March 7.30pm  
St Michael's Church, Macclesfield  
**Christopher Jones** director & violin  
**Kay Stephen** viola  
**Caroline Taylor** soprano  
**Ralph Thomas Williams** countertenor

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