




NORTHERN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

2023-24 SEASON



Making Waves



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NORTHERN
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

SEASON CALENDAR

Beethoven's Emperor

Piano **Martin Roscoe** | Violin and director **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**

Friday 13 October 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 14 October 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Sunday 15 October 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

Music of Innocence

Violin **Chloë Hanslip** | Soprano **Nadine Benjamin** | Conductor **Delyana Lazarova**

Saturday 4 November 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Christmas Concerts

Friday 8 December 3.30pm & 7.00pm

Tatton Park, Knutsford

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Kantos Chamber Choir | Trumpets **Tracey Redfern** and **Peter Mainwaring** | Conductor **Ellie Slorach**

Violin and director **Ian Watson**

Saturday 16 December 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Northern Winds Unleashed

NCO principals

Friday 19 January 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 20 January 7.30pm

St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

Sunday 21 January 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

Music and Nature

Violin and director **Zoë Beyers**

Saturday 17 February 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Mainly Baroque

Violin and director **Callum Smart** | Viola **Jaren Ziegler**

Friday 8 March 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 9 March 7.30pm

St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

Sunday 10 March 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

Death and the Maiden

Violin and director **Katie Stillman**

Saturday 6 April 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Beethoven and music of the dance

Violin and director **Christopher Jones** | Viola **Kay Stephen**

Saturday 4 May 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Peter and the Wolf (Family Concert)

Friday 31 May 3.00pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Sunday 2 June 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

MAKING WAVES

2022–23 was a year of transition. We settled into our new homes at the King's School and St Michael's Church, with high attendance levels at both. We are truly grateful to our audiences, sponsors, patrons and the Friends of the NCO for their continuing and generous support.

2023–24 is a year of expansion: more concerts in more places and more community activities. A substantial grant from Arts Council England will enable us to present a new concert series and an extensive community and educational programme in Chester and Wirral. These will be in addition to the Macclesfield series, educational work at Macclesfield Music Centre and our residency at the Buxton International Festival. All this is good news for the NCO, its audiences and players.

2023–24 is a year of expansion in another sense: expansion of our repertoire to include not only the familiar but also several new works from the 20th and 21st centuries. We welcome back **Martin Roscoe** and **Chloë Hanslip** to play Beethoven and Mozart respectively. We perform a Mahler symphony for the first time under the guidance of **Delyana Lazarova**, whose stunning performance of the *Eroica* last year lingers long in the memory. We present several other well-known masterpieces, for example Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* (in the arrangement by Mahler), Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola*, and (not least) Beethoven's *Sixth* and *Seventh Symphonies*.

These pieces sit alongside a diverse range of 20th and 21st century music. We feature the European composers Arvo Pärt, Dobrinka Tabakova, Jean Francaix, and Anna Clyne, together with American composers Caroline Shaw, Jennifer Higdon, Charles Ives and Morten Lauridsen. They share common characteristics, namely powerful emotional expression and immediate accessibility. May I close by mentioning someone born in the 21st century, the violist **Jaren Ziegler**, who was only 16 when he won the BBC Young Musician of the Year 2022 String Final. We look forward to his performance of Dobrinka Tabakova's 2006 composition, *Suite in the Old Style*.

On behalf of the NCO I welcome you to our new, varied and ambitious season. I do hope you will enjoy it.

John Phillips
Chair of the Board

BEETHOVEN'S EMPEROR

Piano **Martin Roscoe** | Violin and director **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**

Haydn Symphony No. 104 *London*

Ives The Unanswered Question

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5 *Emperor*

Friday 13 October 2023 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 14 October 2023 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

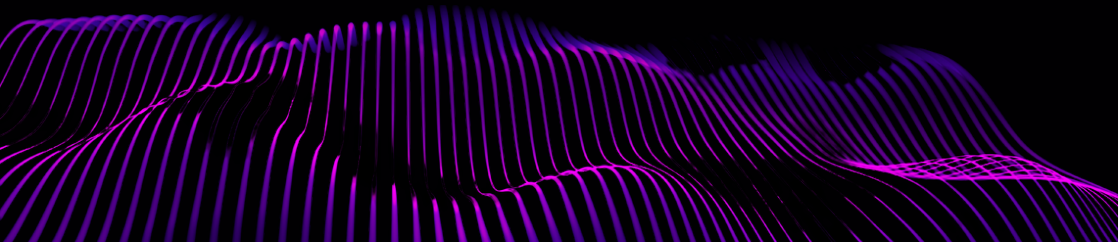
Sunday 15 October 2023 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

Martin Roscoe is one of the UK's greatest pianists and works regularly with many of its leading orchestras. Making a welcome return to the NCO, he performs Beethoven's fifth and final piano concerto, the *Emperor*. Whilst the origin of the title remains unknown, the piece has a majesty and grandeur that well befit its name. The American composer, Charles Ives (1874 – 1954), was ahead of his time in the liberal use of 20th century compositional techniques. Within a mere six minutes *The Unanswered Question* asks about the meaning of existence and, unsurprisingly, fails to find the answer. The programme opens with Haydn's final symphony, the *London*. Premiered there in 1795, its commanding introductory fanfare makes a fitting start to the season.

The concert is directed by **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**, who has toured the world as principal and soloist with the European Union Chamber Orchestra. She was formerly a principal violinist of the Hallé Orchestra and now enjoys a varied career as guest principal with many of the country's leading orchestras.

This concert has been generously sponsored by Michael and Joanna Sambrook.



MUSIC OF INNOCENCE

Violin **Chloë Hanslip** | Soprano **Nadine Benjamin** | Conductor **Delyana Lazarova**

Arvo Pärt Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten

Mozart Violin Concerto in D major, K218

Mahler Symphony No. 4 (arr. Farrington)

Saturday 4 November 2023 7.30pm

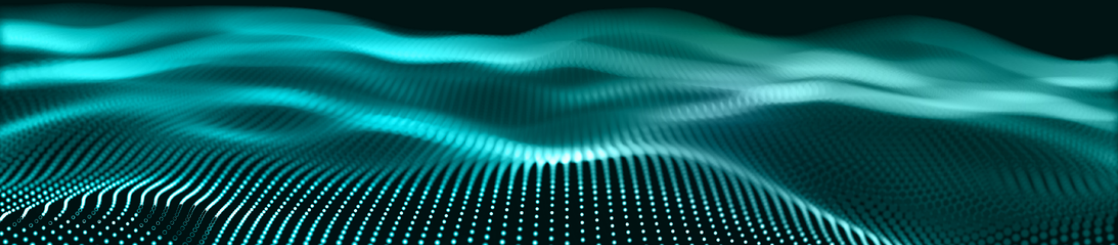
The King's School, Macclesfield

The NCO breaks new ground by performing the Fourth Symphony of Gustav Mahler. His music often features soloistic orchestration and lends itself to a pared-down sound world. Ian Farrington's arrangement for chamber orchestra enables a monumental work to be performed in the intimate surroundings of a smaller venue. The soprano, **Nadine Benjamin**, made her debut with ENO in 2018, at the BBC Proms in 2019 and at the Royal Opera House in 2020. She sings the symphony's final song, which views heaven through the innocent eyes of a child.

Chloë Hanslip is the NCO's Artist in Association and a distinguished violinist on the international stage. Recent and forthcoming highlights include concerto performances with the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia and Hallé orchestras. She joins the NCO in Mozart's youthful *Violin Concerto No.4*. In his evocative *Cantus* the Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt, mourns the death of Benjamin Britten, whom he greatly admired.

Following her triumphant performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony last season, **Delyana Lazarova** returns to conduct the concert. In 2022/23 she makes her American debut, works for the first time with the Philharmonia Orchestra and returns to the Orchestre National de France and the CBSO.

This concert has been generously sponsored by Caro Brown.



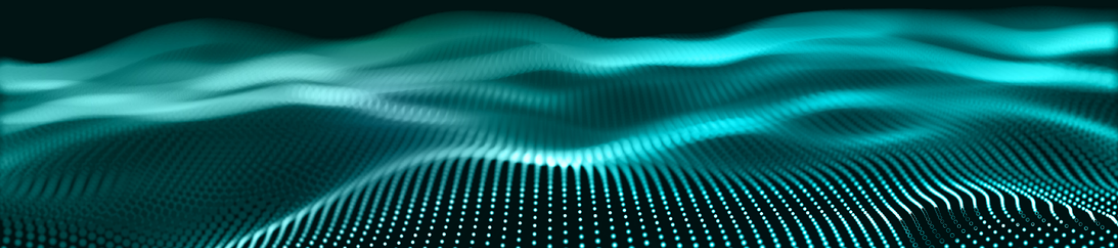
CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

Friday 8 December 2023 3.30pm and 7.00pm
Tatton Park, Knutsford

Join the Northern Chamber Orchestra for its annual Christmas Concerts in the grand Tenants' Hall at Tatton Park.

Expect festive favourites, readings and carols, sung by the **Choir of St Nicholas Catholic High School, Northwich**. There will be carols to join in with, so bring your best singing voices! The evening concert also includes a tour of the Mansion House.

Start your Christmas celebrations with the NCO– tickets sell out every year so don't delay!



GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

Trumpets **Tracey Redfern** and **Peter Mainwaring** | Choir **Kantos Chamber Choir** | Conductor **Ellie Slorach** | Violin and director **Ian Watson**

Vivaldi Concerto for Two Trumpets

Tabakova Alma Redemptoris Mater

Corelli Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 in G minor (Fatto per la notte di Natale)

Lauridsen O Magnum Mysterium

Vivaldi Gloria

Saturday 16 December 2023 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

A concert with Christmas themes. Vivaldi's *Gloria*, his most significant sacred work, is matched only by *The Four Seasons* in its popularity. Whilst the opening words derive from the Latin Mass, they might be thought to bear a Christmas message: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill'. The NCO is joined by the **Kantos Chamber Choir**, which records regularly for BBC Radio and performs with orchestras such as the BBC Philharmonic and the RLPO.

Two orchestral works and two pieces for choir alone precede the *Gloria*. Corelli's *Christmas Concerto* is one of the most famous of Christmas Concerti Grossi, whilst Vivaldi's *Concerto for Two Trumpets*, played here by the NCO's own principals, **Tracey Redfern** and **Peter Mainwaring**, sparkles with joyous fanfares. These concertos are interspersed with two contemporary choral masterpieces, Morten Lauridsen's deeply moving *O magnum Mysterium* (1994), based on a Gregorian chant for Christmas, and Dobrinka Tabakova's *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (2014).

Kantos is conducted by **Ellie Slorach**. Based in Manchester, she makes her debut this season with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Orchestra of Opera North and Manchester Camerata. The orchestral pieces are directed from the violin by Ian Watson, who has acted as guest principal with many of the UK's leading orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, the BBC Philharmonic, the RLPO and the London Mozart Players.

This concert has been generously sponsored by Dr Barbara and Bevan Broadbent.

NORTHERN WINDS UNLEASHED

NCO principals

Strauss Serenade for 13 Wind Instruments

Mozart Serenade for Winds in C minor

Francaix Musique pour faire plaisir

Strauss Suite in B flat major

Friday 19 January 2024 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 20 January 2024 7.30pm

St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

Sunday 21 January 2024 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

After the outstanding success of its concert last season the NCO's wind section returns with a programme focused on Richard Strauss. Strauss was just seventeen when he composed the lyrical and remarkably original *Serenade for 13 Wind Instruments*. His *Suite in B flat major* is a later and more substantial work with the same instrumentation. Almost symphonic in style, it looks forward to his mature orchestral masterpieces.

Strauss flanks Francaix and Mozart. The French composer, Jean Francaix, wrote *Musique pour faire plaisir* in 1984 and, as its name suggests, it is comical, light-hearted and fun. Full of memorable dissonances and characterised by dark-hued, sombre colours, Mozart's *Serenade for Winds in C minor* forms a dramatic contrast.

The concert is directed by the NCO wind principals.

This concert has been generously sponsored by the Friends of the Northern Chamber Orchestra.

MUSIC AND NATURE

Violin and director **Zoë Beyers**

Delius On Hearing The First Cuckoo In Spring

Delius A Song Before Sunrise

Caroline Shaw and the swallow

Vaughan Williams The Lark Ascending

Beethoven Symphony No. 6 *Pastoral*

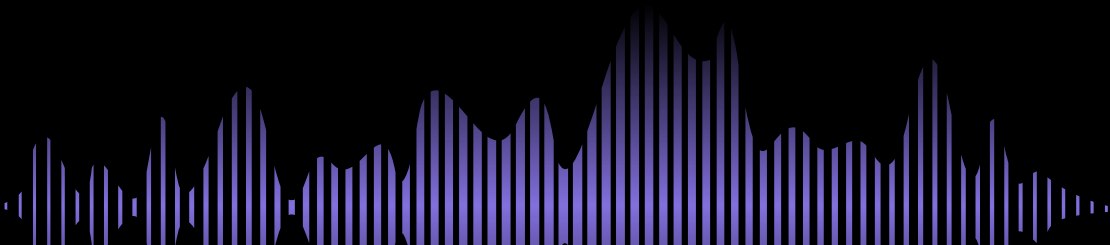
Saturday 17 February 2024 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Many composers have turned to nature for inspiration and this programme reflects some of the finest examples. Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* needs no introduction, even though it has been dislodged from first to second place in the Classic FM Hall of Fame 2023. The titles given by Beethoven to the movements of the *Pastoral* Symphony (e.g. 'Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country') might suggest programmatic music but, as one expects with Beethoven, he was less interested in delightful pictures than the emotions they elicit. Two miniature tone poems by Delius reveal his impressionistic skills, whilst *and the swallow* by the contemporary American composer, Caroline Shaw, is a simple but touching arrangement of her choral setting of Psalm 84.

Zoë Beyers directs the NCO for the first time and is the soloist in *The Lark Ascending*. In 2020 she was appointed leader of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and appears regularly as guest leader with many other orchestras including the Hallé, RLPO, BBC Symphony, CBSO, Philharmonia and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

This concert has been generously sponsored by Caro Brown.



MAINLY BAROQUE

Violin and director **Callum Smart** | Viola **Jaren Ziegler** | **NCO principals**

Rameau Rondeau des Indes Galantes

Biber Battalia

Albinoni Concerto for Oboe in D minor

Tabakova Suite in the Old Style

Vivaldi Concerto for Two Flutes in C major

Bach Concerto for Two Violins in D minor

Friday 8 March 2024 7.30pm

Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Saturday 9 March 2024 7.30pm

St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

Sunday 10 March 2024 3.00pm

Storyhouse, Chester

Mainly baroque but not completely. The violist **Jaren Ziegler** was only sixteen years old when he won the BBC Young Musician of the Year 2022 String Final. We welcome him to perform Dobrinka Tabakova's *Suite in the Old Style* (2006) for viola and chamber orchestra, which presents scenes from life in an 18th century aristocratic household, for example hunting, dancing and entertaining in opulent surroundings.

The term 'baroque' is widely used to describe Western art music composed from about 1600 to 1750. Bach and Vivaldi are of course well-known examples but Rameau, Biber and Albinoni less so. The famous 'Bach Double' (1720s), with its sublime slow movement, is his only concerto for two violins. Bach was a great admirer of Vivaldi, whose light-hearted *Concerto for Two Flutes* was written about the same time. Rameau's 'Rondeau des Indes Galantes' (1735), Heinrich Biber's hilarious (yes!) *Battalia* (1673) and Albinoni's *Concerto for Oboe* in D minor (1722) complete the programme.

Callum Smart makes his debut as director of the NCO. He is quickly developing a reputation as one of Britain's finest young violinists and now enjoys concerto appearances with the UK's major orchestras, including the Hallé, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the RLPO and the Philharmonia.

This concert has been generously sponsored by Geoff Holman.



DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

Violin and director **Katie Stillman**

Purcell (ed. Britten) Chacony

Clyne Stride

Britten Simple Symphony

Schubert Death and the Maiden (arr. Mahler)

Saturday 6 April 2024 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

Schubert's string quartet *Death and the Maiden*, a masterpiece of the chamber music repertoire, is performed here in Mahler's arrangement for string ensemble. The title comes from one of Schubert's earlier songs in which a terror-stricken maiden begs death to pass her by. The music is correspondingly profound, often disturbing and full of startling dramatic contrasts.

Britten had completed his *Simple Symphony* by the time he was 20. Optimistic in tone, it forms a nice contrast to the Schubert and, like many pieces with 'Simple' in the title, is difficult to play. Britten was a great admirer of Purcell, whose brief *Chacony* opens the programme in an edition by Britten himself.

Anna Clyne is one of the foremost living British composers. She has served as Composer in Residence with several outstanding orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia. *Stride* draws its inspiration from Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata, whose first movement octave leaps gave *Stride* its title.

Katie Stillman directs the strings of the NCO. She has an extensive career as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral principal. She is Associate Leader of Manchester Camerata and has appeared as guest leader with Opera North, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the RLPO among others.

This concert has been generously sponsored by the Friends of the Northern Chamber Orchestra.



BEETHOVEN AND MUSIC OF THE DANCE

Violin and director **Christopher Jones** | Viola **Kay Stephen**

Higdon Dance Card (movements)

Mozart Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola

Beethoven Symphony No. 7

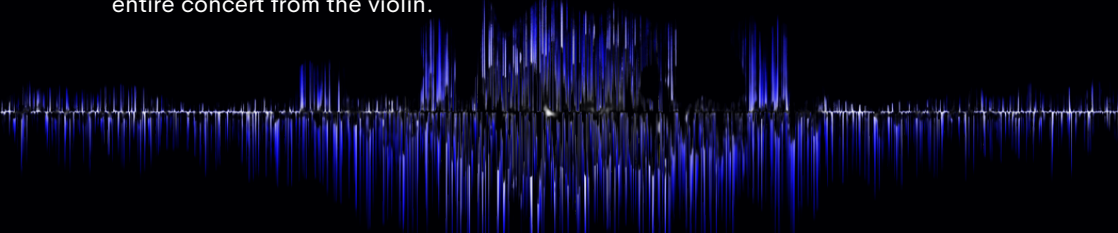
Saturday 4 May 2024 7.30pm

The King's School, Macclesfield

If nature inspires our February concert, dance inspires this one. Wagner proclaimed Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* as 'the Apotheosis of the Dance; the Dance in its highest condition; the happiest realisation of the movements of the body in an ideal form'. Beethoven himself cited his *Grand Symphony in A* as 'one of my best works'. At the risk of hyperbole, the symphony's rhythmic vitality, forward drive and sheer joy make it one of the finest creations of Western art music.

Music of the dance pervades the 21st century too. The contemporary American composer, Jennifer Higdon, wrote *Dance Card* in 2015. In her programme note she describes the piece as a celebration of the joy, lyricism and passion of a group of strings playing together, observing that each of the five movements can be performed as a separate work. The NCO plays a selection.

It is sometimes forgotten that Mozart was an outstanding violinist. His *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola* is really a double concerto in which each instrument plays an equal part. Filled with drama more reminiscent of his operas, it is an astonishing achievement, not least because Mozart was only 23 when he composed it. **Christopher Jones** (violin) and **Kay Stephen** (viola) make a welcome return following their virtuosic performance of Lera Auerbach's *Sogno di Stabat Mater* at St Michael's Church last season. Christopher also directs the entire concert from the violin.



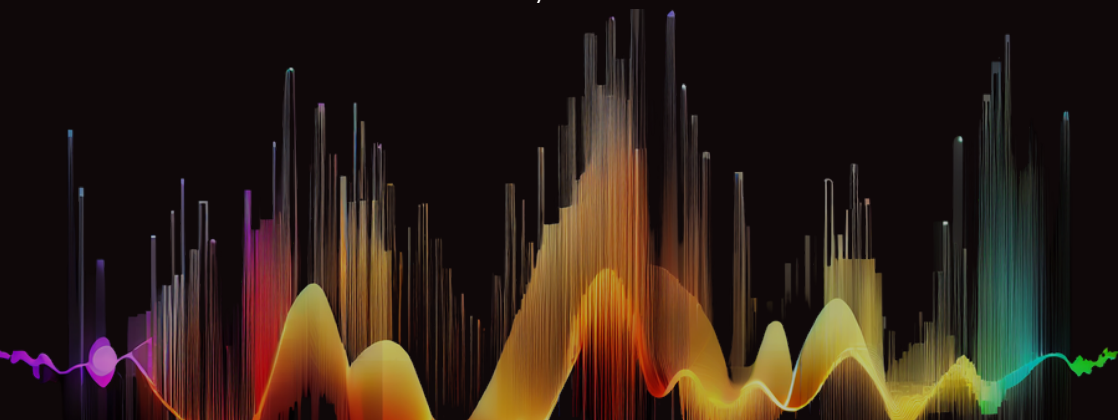
PETER AND THE WOLF A FAMILY CONCERT

Friday 31 May 2024 3.00pm
Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight

Sunday 2 June 2024 3.00pm
Storyhouse, Chester

The great composer Sergei Prokofiev spent many years outside his Russian homeland, living in Paris and touring the world, including several visits to the United States. *Peter and the Wolf*, subtitled "an orchestral fairy tale for children", was composed in 1936 after Prokofiev's return to Russia. He should have added "and for grownups too" to the subtitle, for this remarkable composition appeals to people of all ages. The narrator tells a children's story, while the orchestra illustrates it by using different instruments to play a "theme" representing each character in the story: the bird by a flute, the duck by an oboe, the cat by a clarinet, the grandfather by a bassoon, the wolf by a horn, Peter by the strings, and the shooting of the hunters by a timpani and bass drum. It is one of the most frequently performed works in the entire classical repertoire.

Prokofiev produced detailed notes for the piece, stating, "Before an orchestral performance it is desirable to show these instruments to the children and to play on them the corresponding leitmotifs. Thereby, the children learn to distinguish the sounds of the instruments during the performance of this tale." Rest assured that the NCO will obey these instructions to the letter, leading to a fun yet educational concert for the whole family!



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Flute

Conrad Marshall

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Ben Hudson

Rachel Whibley

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Horn

Naomi Atherton

Jenny Cox

Trumpet

Tracey Redfern

Supported by Dr John Bush

Peter Mainwaring

Timpani

John Melbourne

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In 2023, we will be launching our **Northern Circle** Legacy scheme. NCO is a registered charity and the money we raise through ticket sales and donations is used wisely:

commissioning new works, paying our musicians, investing in rehearsal time and much more. Long-term gifts such as legacies will help us to continue presenting concerts, attract distinguished musicians, collaborate with organisations such as Buxton International Festival, and deliver our education and community programmes.

Visit **www.ncorch.co.uk/legacies**

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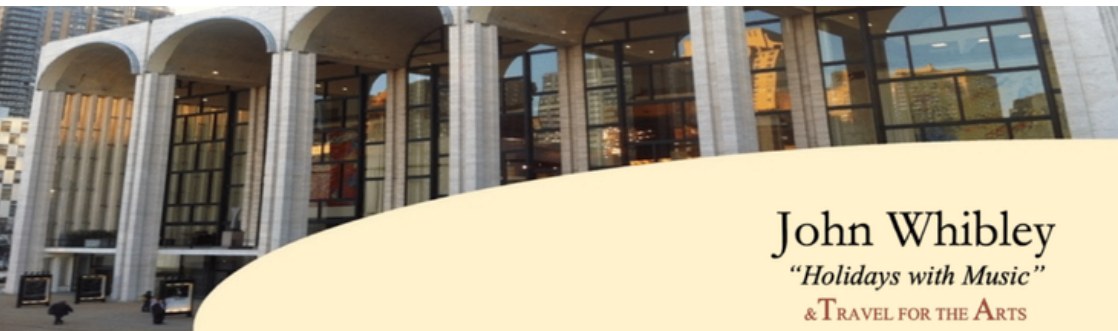
Family of four (to include at least two children) £50

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With thanks to our season sponsor



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We gratefully acknowledge that our Macclesfield season and associated education programme is additionally supported by The Scops Arts Trust, the Ashley Family Foundation and the Gisela Graham Foundation.

We would also like to thank the Friends of the NCO and all our Patrons. The NCO is a registered charity (no. 278912) and an incorporated company (no. 1430784). We welcome donations in support of our concert programmes, learning and development programmes, and work with dementia care under the Mind Music banner.

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