

**FROM
DARK
NESS**

NORTHERN
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

**TO
LIGHT**



Saturday 5 April 2025
The King's School, Macclesfield
Northern Chamber Orchestra

From Darkness to Light
*Director Sarah Brandwood-
Spencer*

Sarah Brandwood-Spencer

Associate Director of Northern Chamber Orchestra

Since her debut in Paris to an audience of 3,000, Sarah Brandwood-Spencer has enjoyed a busy career as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player. A graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, she has toured the world as principal and soloist with the European Union Chamber Orchestra, been guest associate concertmaster with the Canadian Opera Company, worked as a principal player with the prestigious Goldberg Ensemble and was a founder member, principal and soloist with the Lancashire Sinfionetta.

Sarah was a principal violinist of the Halle Orchestra for seven years and is now enjoying a varied career as guest leader and principal player with many of the country's leading orchestras, and as a recording artist for various television, film and pop sessions. Sarah is a passionate chamber musician, and performs regularly with her colleagues in the Chagall Ensemble.



Established in 1967, the **Northern Chamber Orchestra** (NCO) has evolved into a prominent ensemble. The upcoming Macclesfield concert season features esteemed guest soloists including Raphael Wallfisch and Jeneba Kanneh-Mason. The orchestra's twenty-one members are not only accomplished chamber musicians but also perform regularly as soloists. Our orchestra is led by the talented Zoë Beyers as Music Director and Sarah Brandwood-Spencer as Associate Director. Their creative experience and dynamic approach allow our orchestra to reach new audiences and expand our horizons.

The NCO actively engages with schools, colleges, and music groups in its concert locations, providing tailor-made, inspiring programmes for both young and adult learners. This commitment to education extends to collaborations with institutions like Chetham's School of Music and Essential Music Hub. The NCO works with and is supported by several area music education hubs, such as 'Accent' Warrington and Halton Education Hub, the Love Music Trust, NYMAZ North Yorkshire Music Education Hub, Derbyshire, and Greater Manchester Music Education Hubs. These collaborations strengthen the NCO's mission of spreading the power of music education and nurturing young talents in the field.

NORTHERN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY 5 APRIL 7.30PM | THE KING'S SCHOOL IN MACCLESFIELD

Fidelio Op. 72: Overture, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Chamber Symphony Op. 110a, Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

- I. Largo
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Allegretto
- IV. Largo
- V. Largo

Symphony No. 5 in C minor Op. 67, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo. Allegro
- IV. Allegro

This programme features two of Western music's pre-eminent composers. Both left an extensive canon, works of extraordinary technical skill, economy of musical material and great emotional range. Both lived in revolutionary times, the French and Russian Revolutions respectively, and through pan-European wars. Both contended with social change, political upheaval and police surveillance. Both thought seriously of taking their own lives.

With its themes of freedom and justice, **Ludwig van Beethoven's** opera *Fidelio* was seen as a potential threat to the conservative Viennese government and monarchy. It was authorised for performance only after the libretto had been approved by the censors, and on condition of the presence of a police official to ensure compliance. By the time of the premiere in 1805 though, Vienna was occupied by French troops and they, rather than the royal court, made up most of the audience.

Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony* is a string orchestra arrangement of his *String Quartet No. 8* by the violist and conductor Rudolf Barshai. Written in 1960, the quartet's dedication is somewhat ambiguous: 'In Memory of the Victims of Fascism and War'. This has been variously interpreted as referring to WWII and Nazi Germany, or more generally to all forms of fascism and war, or more personally to Shostakovich himself, and his friends and colleagues, living under Stalin's totalitarian regime. The five movements, played without a break, quote from Shostakovich's oeuvre at key points in his life, including: his graduation piece, *Symphony No. 1*; the penitential *Symphony No. 5*; works dedicated to close friends, the *Piano Trio No. 2* and the *Cello Concerto No. 1*; and the opera which first brought him into conflict with Stalin, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*. There are also allusions to or quotations from other works: Tchaikovsky's final *Pathétique Symphony*, Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre*, the *Dies Irae*, the 'Muss es sein?' motive from Beethoven's last string quartet, the Funeral March from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, and the popular revolutionary song *Zamuchen tyazholy nevolyyey* ('Tormented by harsh captivity'). These are all bound together through three short, recurring motives: an anapaest rhythm (short – short – long), a falling semitone appoggiatura (used melodically and also structurally in the work's key relationships), and the four notes D ♮ E ♭ C ♯ B ♮, that is, Shostakovich's initials spelt in German, DSCH. The work opens and ends in C minor, a key traditionally associated with tragedy, and is suffused with the intervals of the DSCH motive. The first four movements resemble a series of tableaux, darkly introspective. The appearance of musical memories/allusions or new sections is often signalled by the DSCH motive, as if Shostakovich is saying 'now listen to this' as he leads us past the next melancholic exhibit. In the last movement, though, the music finally flows. There are no more quotations, save an accompanying figure from Act 4 of *Lady Macbeth*, where chained convicts trudge to a labour camp and the main character, Katarina, throws herself into an icy Siberian river. The DSCH motive, freed from its constraints, develops, in the words of Stephen Johnson, a 'dignified, desperately sad fugal release that this music has long sought'.

Beethoven was familiar with the stirring military marches and songs of post-revolutionary French music, epitomised by *La Marseillaise*. The musicologist Arnold Schmitz suggested that Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, written between 1804 and 1808, obliquely references the beliefs that fuelled the French Revolution, with the symphony's opening motive, that most famous of musical gestures, alluding to the rhythms of Cherubini's 1794 *Hymne au Panthéon* and its text 'nous jurons tous, le fer en main'. This four-note motive underpins the entire symphony from its beginning in C minor, to its ending in a blaze of C major. The pent-up tension and extraordinary concision of the portentous first movement is tempered by a lyrical, prayerful double-variation second movement. The dark, rather ambiguous scherzo, with its ringing horn theme is contrasted by a jocular trio. A mysterious, unsettling passage transitions from the scherzo into the exultant finale. Beethoven augments the orchestral colours here, with a piccolo, contrabassoon and three trombones making their first appearance in a symphony orchestra. After a recalling material from the third movement, the finale's coda surges towards the extended cadence which brings this momentous work to its brilliant conclusion.

PATRONS

Professor Alison and Dr Craig Adam · Alison Allcard · Dr Mary Anderson · Michael and Judith Biggin · Roger Brice Hilary Brice · Nicola Bright · Bevan and Dr Barbara Broadbent · Caro Brown · Dr John Bush · Arthur Dicken · Ian Edgar MBE · David Ellis (in memoriam) · Kate Foster Heather Griffiths · Geoff Holman in memory of Jennie David Johnson · Judy Jones in memory of Alan · Dr David Kingsley · Allan and Eleanor Lewington · Angela Losse · Drs Chris and Mary Loughran · Joan Matthews · Vernon Matthews · Kevin Malone · Kim Maxwell · Peter Raynes · Anthony Rybicki · Dr Michael Sambrook · Dieter Senn · Kate Slack · Martin Slack · Adrienne Spilsbury · David Sutton · Dr Peter Thomasson · Steve Threlfall · Jonathan Tipler · John Walsh · Catherine Webb · Mike and Ruth Wilbey · Sue Williams · Jane and Wyn Davies

Patron: Stephen Barlow
President: Raphael Wallfisch
Vice-President: Martin Roscoe
Honorary Patron: The Baroness Bakewell OBE

CHAIR SPONSORS

Angela Losse (supporting Simon Gilks, violin) · **Eleanor Lewington** (supporting Louise Latham, violin) · **Dr Michael Sambrook** (supporting Rebecca Thompson, violin) · **Kate and Martin Slack** (supporting Michael Dale, viola) · **Judy Jones in memory of Alan** (supporting Jennifer Langridge, cello) · **Peter Raynes** (supporting Barbara Grunthal, cello) · **Dieter Senn** (supporting Conrad Marshall, flute) · **Jane and Wyn Davies** (supporting Nichola Hunter, flute) · **Geoff Holman** (supporting Naomi Atherton, horn) · **Caro Brown** (supporting Kenny Sturgeon, oboe) · **John Whibley Holidays** (supporting Rachel Whibley, bassoon) · **Dr John Bush** (supporting Tracey Redfern, trumpet) · Elizabeth Jordan (clarinet), Daniel Bayley (clarinet) and Jennifer Cox (horn) are supported anonymously.

For information about sponsoring a chair or concert, or becoming a Friend or Patron, please visit www.ncorch.co.uk/support

UPCOMING CONCERTS

Mozart on Tour (Prague) at Storyhouse
Storyhouse, Chester
Sunday 27th April, 3pm

Mozart on Tour (Prague)
The King's School, Macclesfield
Saturday 3rd May, 7.30pm

www.ncorch.co.uk
0161 706 1990

THE ORCHESTRA

Violin I
Sarah Brandwood-Spencer
Sarah Whittingham
Paula Smart
Alexandra Stemp
Catherine Studman

Violin II
Simon Gilks
Rebecca Thompson
Sophie McQueen
Anna O'Brien

Viola
Benjamin Newton
Aimée Johnson
Josie Wells

Cello
Jennifer Langridge
Barbara Grunthal
Amanda Turner

Double Bass
James Manson
Diane Clark

Flute
Conrad Marshall
Nichola Hunter

Piccolo
Sarah Hoffman

Oboe
Kenny Sturgeon
Jane Evans

Clarinet
Daniel Bayley
Jill Allan

Bassoon
Benjamin Hudson
Rachel Whibley

Contra Bassoon
Elizabeth Trigg

Horn
Naomi Atherton
Jennifer Cox

Trumpet
Tracey Redfern
Peter Mainwaring

Trombone
Anthony Boorer
Rachel Allen
Les Storey

Timpani
Mark Concar

Even classics need to be checked

Accurate information at a price you can't afford to ignore

1 in 3 vehicles has a hidden past. Ensure your choice is sound: get a comprehensive vehicle history check at mycarcheck.com for just £9.99

CDL is a proud patron of

NORTHERN
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

mycarcheck.com

MyCarCheck.com is powered by CDL, proud patron of the Northern Chamber Orchestra

The Albert and Eugenie Frost foundation