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2025-26 Macclesfield season













# **SEASON CALENDAR**

## **Starburst**

Violin **Zoë Beyers** | Cello **Jonathan Aasgaard** | Director **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer** Saturday 27 September 7.30pm
The King's School in Macclesfield

## Requiem

Kantos soloists | Manchester Chamber Choir | Conductor Ellie Slorach Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer Saturday 8 November 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

## **Christmas Concerts**

Friday 12 December 3.30pm & 7.00pm Tatton Park, Knutsford

## Serenade

Conductor and Horn **Alec Frank-Gemmill** | Director **Zoë Beyers**Saturday 13 December 7.30pm
The King's School in Macclesfield

## Chevalier de Saint-Georges

Oboe Kenny Sturgeon | Violin Zoë Beyers and Sarah Brandwood-Spencer Director Zoë Beyers Saturday 17 January 5pm St. Michael's Church, Macclesfield

## Valencia

Clarinet Julian Bliss
Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer
Saturday 21 February 7.30pm
The King's School in Macclesfield

## **Clarinet Quintets**

Clarinet Julian Bliss | NCO Soloists Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer Sunday 22 February 3pm The King's School in Macclesfield

### Octet

NCO Soloists | Director Zoë Beyers Saturday 14 March 5pm St. Michael's Church, Macclesfield

## Prince of Clouds

Violin **Zoë Beyers** and **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer** | Director **Zoë Beyers** Saturday 11 April 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

## **Beethoven**

Piano **Steven Osborne OBE** | Director **Zoë Beyers** Saturday 2 May 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

Peter and the Wolf: A Family Concert Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer Sunday 5 July 3pm The King's School in Macclesfield

# WELCOME

Welcome to the Northern Chamber Orchestra's 2025-26 season!

We are delighted to offer our first full season with Zoë and Sarah at the helm. This already formidable orchestra is going from strength to strength and we know this from your feedback. I may spend the intervals working at the bar but how many other orchestra executives get the opportunity to hear their audiences' reaction that directly? That is something truly special.

New leadership brings new ideas so we're looking afresh at the shape of the season – two teatime concerts at St Michael's Church, a Sunday matinee and our first ever Macclesfield Family Concert. Again – we'd love your thoughts.

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to our patrons, sponsors and the Friends of the Northern Chamber Orchestra. These are testing times for the arts and it is your resolute support that makes these performances possible, and magical.

Thank you,

**Charlie Rowley, Chief Executive** 

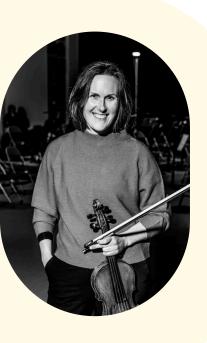


We warmly invite you to join us for our first curated season as directors of the Northern Chamber Orchestra. This season has been devised with you, our audience, at the heart of it: a programme of beautiful and varied masterworks to take you on a journey from the Baroque genius of J.S. Bach to the contemporary voices of Caroline Shaw and Anna Clyne. Joining us are world class soloists including clarinettist Julian Bliss, pianist Steven Osborne, cellist Jonathan Aasgaard and French horn/conductor polymath Alec Frank-Gemmill. The inspirational Ellie Slorach and the Manchester Chamber Choir will return to collaborate with us in Faure's beloved Requiem.

We look forward to building strong relationships with our audience and this exceptional orchestra, and to sharing our passion for this incredible music with you.

Zoë Beyers, Music Director and Sarah Brandwood-Spencer, Associate Director

# Introducing the Directors for our 2025-26 season...



# Zoë Beyers, Music Director

Zoë Beyers was appointed as Music Director of the Northern Chamber Orchestra in 2024. She is the leader of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Zoë has established a reputation as one of the finest violinists based in the UK and performs as soloist, chamber musician, director and orchestral leader across the world. She was first violinist of the Dante Quartet from 2019–2025 and appears as soloist and guest leader with the BBC Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony and Scottish Chamber Orchestras.

Zoë is dedicated to performing the music of contemporary composers and is involved in the commissioning and premiering of several new works. She also has a passionate interest in education, teaching at the Birmingham Conservatoire and coaching violinists and ensembles at the start of their careers. She is proud to be involved in ARCO, a distance learning collaboration between Birmingham Conservatoire and students in deprived areas of South Africa.

# Sarah Brandwood-Spencer, Associate Director

Sarah Brandwood-Spencer was appointed as Associate Director of the Northern Chamber Orchestra in 2024. Since her debut in Paris she 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 Sinfonietta.

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.





# Starburst

Violin Zoë Beyers Cello Jonathan Aasgaard Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer

Jessie Montgomery Starburst Brahms Double Concerto Op. 102 Mendelssohn Symphony No. 3 ('Scottish')

Saturday 27 September 2025 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

We begin this season's exploration of the musical galaxy with Jessie Montgomery's dazzling *Starburst*, a vivacious piece for strings which sparkles with rapidly changing musical colours, exploding gestures and gentle fleeting melodies.

In Brahms' *Double Concerto*, his last orchestral work, two soloists dialogue with each other and with the orchestra in a work full of passion, drama and lyricism.

Dedicated to Queen Victoria, Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 3* evokes the atmospheric ruins of Holyrood Chapel, Highland battles and the landscapes of Scotland.

The soloists in the Brahms' *Double Concerto* are **Zoë Beyers**, our music director, and the Norwegian cellist, **Jonathan Aasgaard**. With an extensive discography, Jonathan is one of Europe's most versatile cellists. He is principal cello of the Sinfonia of London, a regular guest principal of leading British and continental European orchestras and, as a dedicated teacher, Professor of Cello at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

A champion of new music, he has given the world première of Carl Davis's Ballade for cello and orchestra, the European première of Giovanni Sollima's Double Cello Concerto, the UK première of Weinberg's Cello Concerto, the US première of concertos by Franz Neruda and Emil Hartmann, and world premières of dozens of solo pieces, many written specially for him.



# Requiem

Kantos soloists
Manchester Chamber Choir
Conductor Ellie Slorach
Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer

arr. Ellie Slorach after Pérotin *Improvisation on Viderunt omnes*Fauré *Cantique de Jean Racine*Bonis *Ave verum*Ravel *Le Tombeau de Couperin*Fauré *Requiem* 

Saturday 8 November 2025 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

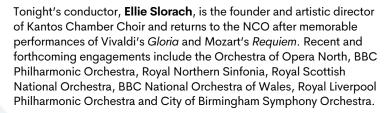
Tonight's programme celebrates the rich cultural heritage of France.

Pérotin was a key figure from the beginnings of Western music, producing some of the earliest repertory of polyphonic (multipart) music at Notre-Dame as the cathedral itself was being built. **Ellie Slorach** reimagines this world with a contemporary twist.

Another talented pioneer, Mel Bonis, produced some three hundred inventive compositions despite the challenges of her modest background and gender. *Ave verum* is a setting of the Latin text "Ave verum Corpus", a prayer honouring the body of Christ, and is a beautiful example of Bonis' skill in creating polyphonic textures and ability to convey a sense of fervour and conviction in music.

Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* is both a homage to the Baroque composer, François Couperin, and a memorial to friends who died during the First World War.

**Fauré's** beautiful *Cantique de Jean Racine*, composed while he was a student in Paris, uses words by the 17th century dramatist, Racine. It is paired with one of the best-loved works in the choral repertory, his *Requiem*.



This concert is generously sponsored by Caro Brown

# CHR IST MAS

# **Christmas Concerts**

Tatton Park, Knutsford Friday 12 December 2025 3.30pm and 7pm



Step into a world of festive storytelling and seasonal magic as the Northern Chamber Orchestra returns to Tatton Park, a heartwarming concert to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year.

Join us in the beautifully decorated Tenant's Hall at Tatton Park for a concert filled with musical charm. The Orchestra will be joined by the talented Choir of St Nicholas Catholic High School, Northwich, conducted by Helen McKenna, as they bring to life the sounds of the season through classic carols and winter favourites.

The evening performance also includes a magical tour of Tatton Park's *Winter Stories* themed Christmas Mansion, glowing with twinkling lights and festive finery.

This is a perfect seasonal outing for friends, families, and groups, and we're pleased to offer 10% off for parties of 10 or more.

Let the music tell the story, and let the magic of winter fill your heart. Create lasting memories with the Northern Chamber Orchestra this Christmas – a story you'll want to return to year after year.

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





# Serenade

Conductor and Horn Alec Frank-Gemmill
Director Zoë Beyers

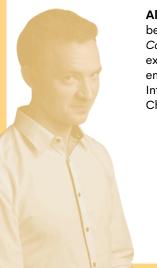
Dvořák Serenade for Strings Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2 Dvořák Czech Suite

Saturday 13 December 2025 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

Tonight's two composers were both great melodists, one rooted in the dramatic world of opera and the other in the music of his native Bohemia.

Mozart's playful Horn Concerto No. 2 captures his teasing, good-natured friendship with Joseph Leutgeb, one of the finest horn players of his time and a colleague of Mozart's father, Leopold, in Salzburg. When Mozart came to write concertos for Leutgeb in Vienna, he saw a chance to poke fun at his old friend and dedicated this work: "Wolfgang Amadé Mozart takes pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox, and simpleton, at Vienna, 27 March 1783."

In his Serenade for Strings and Czech Suite, Dvořák's music flows with an intrinsic immediacy and informality. Invigorating Czech folk rhythms contrast with music of lyrical warmth and tenderness.



Alec Frank-Gemmill is well known to audiences in the UK and beyond as a horn player, his fourth album (Mozart's Horn Concertos with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra) receiving exclusively 5\* reviews. Recent and future conducting engagements include the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, International Symphony Orchestra Lviv, Ukraine, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.

This concert is generously sponsored by Alison Allcard, in memory of Malcolm

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# **Chevalier de Saint-Georges**

Oboe **Kenny Sturgeon**Violin **Zoë Beyers** and **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**Director **Zoë Beyers** 

J.S. Bach Concerto for Oboe and Violin Edmund Finnis Hymn (after Byrd) Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges Symphonie Concertante in G major Tavener Song for Athene J.S. Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 3

> Saturday 17 January 2026 5pm St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

Bach revelled in the possibilities of the multiinstrument concerto, with different voices collaborating and contributing to the whole. We present two of his glorious creations in this form, the third *Brandenburg Concerto* and the *Concerto for Oboe and Violin*.

The story of Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, musician, soldier and sportsman, throws a light on the political turbulence in 18th century France and on the legacy of colonialism and slavery. His works attained widespread acclaim in his lifetime, including the admiration of Queen Marie Antoinette. We perform his charming *Symphonie Concertante in G major*.

Tavener's Song for Athene and Edmund Finnis's Hymn provide moments of repose and reflection.

**Kenny Sturgeon** has been the NCO's principal oboe since 2015 and sub-principal oboe of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra since 2016. In the latter position he broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3, tours and records extensively and performs at the BBC Proms and other festivals across the world.

This concert is generously sponsored by Geoff Holman





# Valencia

Clarinet Julian Bliss
Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer

Caroline Shaw Valencia Mozart Clarinet Concerto Beethoven Symphony No. 8

Saturday 21 February 2026 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

The American composer, Caroline Shaw, often draws inspiration from the simplicity yet utter extraordinariness of nature. Her *Valencia* renders the sensation of eating an orange in music: as Shaw puts it, "Hundreds of brilliantly coloured, impossibly delicate vesicles of juice, ready to explode."

Few can be left unmoved by Mozart's sublime *Clarinet Concerto*, completed in the year of his death. Beloved for its profound mastery and emotional depth, this concerto was written for the virtuoso clarinettist, Anton Stadler, who was famed for the expressive, vocal quality of his playing.

Beethoven's exhilarating *Symphony No. 8* combines humour with serious intent in a work bursting with rhythmic energy, vitality and musical pranks.

Julian Bliss is one of the world's finest clarinettists, excelling as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, recitalist and jazz artist. As a soloist he has appeared with many international orchestras, including the BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Paris and Royal Philharmonic. Excellent reviews and 'Record of the Week' spots continue to flow from his extensive discography, including Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Royal Northern Sinfonia.

This concert is generously sponsored by the Friends of the Northern Chamber Orchestra

# **Clarinet Quintets**

Clarinet Julian Bliss **NCO Soloists** Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer

> Mozart Clarinet Quintet Brahms Clarinet Quintet

Sunday 22 February 2026 3pm The King's School in Macclesfield

Julian Bliss joins NCO Soloists in these two jewels of the chamber music repertoire, works of magnificent craftsmanship born of friendships between the composer and a virtuoso of the clarinet.

Mozart's radiant Clarinet Quintet was written for his friend Anton Stadler. The blissful poetry of its slow Larghetto is unsurpassed.

Written nearly a century later, Brahms' Clarinet Quintet is the perfect complement. The clarinettist, Richard Mühlfeld, tempted Brahms out of self-imposed retirement, giving us this richly coloured, elegiac and passionate work.





Octet

NCO Soloists
Director Zoë Beyers

Schubert Octet

Saturday 14 March 2026 5pm St Michael's Church, Macclesfield

We are delighted to bring you one of the pinnacles of chamber music, Schubert's *Octet*. When Count Troyer, a keen amateur clarinettist, commissioned it, he suggested that Schubert model it on Beethoven's *Septet*, which was immensely popular in Vienna at the time. With its imaginative instrumental interplay, memorable tunes and a style which is relaxed and dramatic in turn, this *Octet* is rightly regarded as a masterpiece for a larger chamber ensemble. It is performed here by the **NCO Soloists**.





# **Prince of Clouds**

Violin **Zoë Beyers** and **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**Director **Zoë Beyers** 

Haydn Symphony No. 49 ('La Passione') Anna Clyne Prince of Clouds Schumann Symphony No. 3 ('Rhenish')

Saturday 11 April 2026 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

Expect high drama in Haydn's edgy 'La Passione', written during the 'Sturm und Drang' period, when works filled with elevated emotionalism flourished in German literature and music.

Anna Clyne's *Prince of Clouds*, a double concerto for two violins and string orchestra, features our music director and associate director, **Zoë Beyers** and **Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**. It contemplates musical lineage, the transfer of knowledge and inspiration between musicians, whether between teacher and pupil or performer and composer. Intricate Bachian textures contrast with moments of ethereal beauty.

Flowing with vibrant energy and intense emotion, Schumann's Symphony No. 3 was inspired by the grandeur of the River Rhine and the solemnity of Cologne Cathedral.





**Beethoven** 

Piano **Steven Osborne OBE**Director **Zoë Beyers** 

Mozart Overture to The Marriage of Figaro Shostakovich Chamber Symphony Op. 83a Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4

> Saturday 2 May 2026 7.30pm The King's School in Macclesfield

Mozart's playful overture to his comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro* fizzes with energy. The bustling notes of its opening, like whispers of gossip and intrigue, capture the pace and the atmosphere of this work of social satire.

With his music being denounced in a post-WWII crackdown in Soviet ideological correctness, did Shostakovich believe that his *String Quartet No. 4* would ever be performed? Friends feared the dire political reaction the work would provoke, in particular due to its inclusion of Jewish motifs at the time of a Stalinist purge of Soviet Jews. Shostakovich's friend, Rudolf Barshai, later arranged the quartet for small orchestra, a version that became known as the *Chamber Symphony Op. 83a*, sympathetically enhancing its many colours.

We conclude this season with an audience favourite, Beethoven's captivating *Piano Concerto No. 4*. From the piano's opening chords, caressing the instrument and evoking an ethereal response from the orchestra, to a slow movement often characterised as Orpheus calming savage beasts, and to its vigorously joyful finale, there are delights at every turn.

Steven Osborne OBE is one of the foremost pianists in the world, evidenced not only by his performances with most major international orchestras but also by his numerous awards. These include the Royal Philharmonic Society 'Instrumentalist of the Year', two 'BBC Music Magazine' awards, two 'Gramophone' awards and 'Recordings of the Year' from the Daily Telegraph, the Guardian, the Times and the Sunday Times. In 2022 The Queen appointed him to an OBE for services to music. Apart from welcoming Steven back to the NCO, nothing further need be said.

This concert is generously sponsored by Bevan and Dr Barbara Broadbent

# PETER AND THE WOLF AND OTHER ANIMALS A FAMILY CONCERT

Sunday 5 July 2026 3pm The King's School in Macclesfield



# Featuring Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, plus excerpts from Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals.

# **Director Sarah Brandwood-Spencer**



# THE NCO PLAYERS

Naomi Atherton (horn)

**Daniel Bayley** (clarinet)

**Zoë Beyers** (Music Director)

Sarah Brandwood-Spencer (Associate Director)

Jenny Cox (horn)

Michael Dale (viola)

Carol Ella (viola)

Jane Evans (oboe)

Simon Gilks (violin)

Barbara Grunthal (cello)

Ben Hudson (bassoon)

Nichola Hunter (flute)

Elizabeth Jordan (clarinet)

Jennifer Langridge (cello)

Louise Latham (violin)

Peter Mainwaring (trumpet)

James Manson (double bass) Chair available for sponsorship

Conrad Marshall (flute)

John Melbourne (timpani)

Alex Mitchell (viola)

Tracey Redfern (trumpet)

Kenny Sturgeon (oboe)

Rebecca Thompson (violin)
Rachel Whibley (bassoon)

Sarah Whittingham (violin)

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Chair available for sponsorship

We are pleased to offer you the opportunity to sponsor a player's chair for the 2025-26 season. Your support will help us to continue to develop artistically and ensure that we are able to retain our world class musicians.

To find out more about sponsoring an NCO player's chair, please visit www.ncorch.co.uk/support

# **NCO PATRONAGE**

Become a **Patron of the Northern Chamber Orchestra** to enjoy a closer relationship with our orchestra and support our work.

- Access to rehearsals
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- Post-concert drinks for you and your guests
- Patrons only events
- Acknowledgement on our website and in our concert programmes
- Priority booking

# Visit www.ncorch.co.uk/patrons email info@ncorch.co.uk or call 0161 7061990

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# **NCO FRIENDS**

The NCO is lucky to have an extremely loyal and dedicated Friends organisation, which supports us in a number of ways. Becoming a Friend of the NCO is easy and as well as supporting the orchestra, you will receive a range of exclusive benefits.

- Discounted tickets
- Attend special events and pre-concert talks
- Join members of the orchestra and other Friends for a post-concert drink
- Priority booking

Visit www.ncorch.co.uk/friends email friends@ncorch.co.uk or call 0161 7061990

# **LEGACIES**

As we look to the future, envisioning the next 30 years and beyond, we ask for your support through legacy gifts. The 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 buying or hiring music. Long-term gifts such as legacies will help us to continue presenting concerts, attracting distinguished chamber musicians and soloists, and delivering our learning and participation opportunities.

Visit www.ncorch.co.uk/legacies
email info@ncorch.co.uk or call 0161 7061990

# **TICKET BOOKING**

# MACCLESFIELD CONCERT SEASON

## Individual tickets:

£29 | Under 30s £19 | Under 18s and students free

# **Full season tickets**

£204

## Part season tickets

Book 4-7 concerts for a 10% discount.

10% discount for groups of 10 or more.

Please note that the Clarinet Quintet concert on Sunday 22 February is not included in the season ticket, and is priced at £25 (£15 for under 30s). The Tatton Park Christmas Concerts are also extra, and pricing for these can be found below.

# **TATTON PARK CHRISTMAS CONCERTS**

## Matinee concert

£21 | Under 18s and students £11

# **Evening concert (including a tour of the Mansion)**

£28 | Under 18s and students £18

10% discount for groups of 10 or more.

NCO Friends and Patrons receive a discount on tickets for all concerts.

www.ncorch.co.uk 0161 706 1990

# John Whibley

"Holidays with Music" &Travel for the Arts



Our 2025 - 2026 holidays include:

Chamber Music in Cuenca, Wexford Festival Opera, Christmas Oratorio in Leipzig, New Year at Dartington, Opera in Venice and Trieste, Chamber Music in York, Wagner's Ring in Berlin, Bath Bachfest with Richard Wigmore, Music in a French Village, Easter in Leipzig, West Cork Chamber Music, Hamburg, Opera at Drottningholm, Buxton International Festival, New York Met' ... and many more



Contact us:

01663 746578 john@whibley.co.uk www.whibley.co.uk















Photo credits: Sara Porter Photography, 2024.

With thanks to our season sponsor



We gratefully acknowledge that our Macclesfield season and associated education programme is additionally supported by the Albert and Eugenie Frost Music Trust, the Earl of Chester's Fund and the Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust.

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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