

BEETHOVEN

Saturday 2 May 7.30pm. King's School Macclesfield

Northern Chamber Orchestra

Piano Steven Osborne

Director Zoë Beyers



This concert is generously sponsored by Dr Barbara Broadbent, in memory of Bevan

PROGRAMME

**Overture to The marriage of Figaro, K.492,
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)**

**Chamber Symphony (arrangement of String
Quartet No. 4), Op. 83a, Dmitri Dmitriyevich
Shostakovich (1906 – 1975), arr. Rudolf
Barshai**

- I. Allegretto
- II. Andantino
- III. Allegretto, *attacca*
- IV. Allegretto

**Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major Op. 58,
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)**

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Rondo: Vivace

STEVEN OSBORNE

Steven Osborne OBE is one of Britain's most admired pianists, celebrated for the depth, intelligence and expressive range of his playing. Equally at home in Beethoven, Schubert and Ravel as in Messiaen and Prokofiev, he has built an international reputation for performances of exceptional insight and refinement. He is also admired for his spontaneous improvisations in recital, revealing another side of his musicianship.



A regular guest at leading venues including Wigmore Hall, the Concertgebouw and Berlin Philharmonie, he also appears with major orchestras worldwide. His many honours include the Royal Philharmonic Society Instrumentalist of the Year award and multiple Gramophone Awards.

A distinguished recording artist for Hyperion Records, Osborne has made more than 30 acclaimed recordings. Born in Scotland, he studied in Edinburgh and at the Royal Northern College of Music, and was appointed an OBE for services to music in 2022.

THE ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Zoë Beyers
Midori Tramaseur
Sarah Whittingham
Karen Mainwaring
Chris Karwacinski

Violin II

Catherine Yates
Rebecca Thompson
James Pattinson
Anthony Banks

Viola

Kimi Makino
Gemma Dunne
Amy Hark

Cello

Jennifer Langridge
Barbara Grunthal

Double Bass

Diane Clark
Thomas Betts

Flute

Conrad Marshall
Nichola Hunter

Oboe

Kenny Sturgeon
Jane Evans

Clarinet

Elizabeth Jordan
Helen Blamey

Bassoon

Angharad Thomas
Sarah Faulkner

Horn

Rebecca Hill
Jenny Cox

Trumpet

Andy Dallimore
Neil Fulton

Timpani

Stephen Burke

ZOË BEYERS

Zoë Beyers was appointed as Music Director of the Northern Chamber Orchestra in 2024. She is the leader of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and has recently been appointed as the leader of Britten Sinfonia.

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, Philharmonic, 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.

PROGRAMME NOTES

1786 was a highly productive year for the thirty-year-old **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**. He completed three piano concertos, his *Prague Symphony*, various other vocal, keyboard, orchestral and chamber works, as well as his masterpiece, the comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, the first of three operas which Mozart wrote in collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. The opera's playful overture is a concert favourite. It fizzles with energy, opening with bustling notes, like whispers of gossip and intrigue, that capture the pace and the atmosphere of this work of social satire. The opera was based on a play by Beaumarchais which was openly critical of aristocratic privilege, and Da Ponte had bowed to political pressure, toning down its content in order to obtain Emperor Joseph II's approval of the libretto.

In Soviet Russia, composers were also under political pressure. They were expected to conform to Socialist realism, writing music built upon the traditions of the past but free of bourgeois elements. While the use of folk music was encouraged, **Dmitri Shostakovich's** inclusion of Jewish motifs in his 1949 *String Quartet No. 4* was politically dangerous, in the climate of a post-WWII Stalinist purge of Soviet Jews. After its first, private performance, friends advised Shostakovich to withhold the quartet, fearing a dire reaction should the work be performed publicly. And so, the score was put to one side, until the political tide turned after Stalin's death in 1953. Rudolf Barshai, Shostakovich's friend and violist in the Borodin Quartet, later arranged the work for small orchestra, sympathetically enhancing its many colours. The first movement is built on a drone, whose melody has an Eastern flavour, suggestive perhaps of a Jewish cantor. It subsides into a reflective ending, leading to the next movement, a wistful, forlorn waltz with a persistent two-note accompaniment.

The third movement with its uneasy, subdued perpetual motion figuration flows into the concluding movement. This is the emotional heart of the quartet, with idioms reminiscent of Hasidic folksong creating an exhilarating, if disquieting, dance.

Ludwig van Beethoven too lived in a time of political change and uncertainty, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars that followed. Enlightenment ideas, such as the promotion of individual rights and freedoms, influenced Beethoven's life and work as he carved out a path driven by a belief in his genius. The *Piano Concerto No. 4* was composed in 1805–1806, during a highly creative period for Beethoven. He had faced down suicidal thoughts (Heiligenstadt Testament, 1802) and was producing innovative, intense and emotionally powerful work, including the 'Appassionata' and 'Waldstein' piano sonatas, the Violin and the Triple Concertos, the 'Razumovsky' String Quartets, and Symphonies Nos. 4, 5 and 6. The public premiere of this concerto was Beethoven's last as a piano soloist with orchestra, due to his increasing deafness. It starts intimately with the piano alone, a radical beginning. When the orchestra enter, they seem to be on a different page, answering in the 'wrong' key of B major, quite distant from the home key of G major. The separation between soloist and orchestra plays out in the second movement, where the introspective pianist seems oblivious to the strings' militaristic tone. The piano's lament intensifies and the strings recede. Some Romantic commentators likened this movement to Orpheus' taming of the Furies. In the finale, the strings set off with the vivacious rondo theme, in a witty off-key C major. Celebratory trumpets and timpani join in for the first time, and bravura passagework and playfulness follow. There is a beautiful reinterpretation of the rondo theme on divided violas in a dreamy E flat major before the cadenza, after which orchestra and soloist are fully reconciled, stating the rondo theme in canon before a spirited conclusion.

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